

THE EZEKIEL CODE

A Metaphysical/Mystery/Adventure/Thriller

Acres of Heaven = 117
The Three Times = 102
The Sun disc = 144
The number = 106
The number = 159
The number = 105
The number = 117
The number = 360
The number = 151
The number = 224

*And a voice spoke unto me saying,
this is for a generation yet to come,
and they that bear your name will come
and they that bear your name will be given
the knowledge to understand the mystery.*

— From the Lost Scroll of Ezekiel

GARY VAL TENUTA

Outskirts Press, Inc.
Denver, Colorado

This is a work of fiction. The events and characters described here are imaginary and are not intended to refer to specific places or living persons. The opinions expressed in this manuscript are solely the opinions of the author and do not represent the opinions or thoughts of the publisher.

THE EZEKIEL CODE

The Ezekiel Code
All Rights Reserved
Copyright © 2007 Gary Val Tenuta
v8.0 R1.2

This book may not be reproduced, transmitted, or stored in whole or in part by any means, including graphic, electronic, or mechanical without the express written consent of the publisher except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

Outskirts Press
<http://www.outskirtspress.com>

ISBN-13: 978-1-4327-0650-0

*And a voice spoke unto me saying,
this miracle is for a generation yet to come.
A son of man bearing your name will come
in the days of that generation and to him will be given
the knowledge to understand the mystery.*

– From the Lost Scroll of Ezekiel

GARY VAL TENUTA

Outskirts Press and the “OP” logo are trademarks belonging to
Outskirts Press, Inc.

Printed in the United States of America

To my soulmate, Julie, for her genuine enthusiasm, unwavering faith in the project, constant encouragement, and honest opinions during the many years it took to write this novel. Thanks, Jule. This one's for you.

Acknowledgments

My thanks (in random order): to Richard C. Hoagland at enterprisemission.com and Dave at AstroCentral (U.K.) for their valuable insights regarding comet trajectories; to Ian Campbell, co-author (with David Wood) of *Geneset: Target Earth*, for graciously providing me with the physical descriptions of the terrain around Rennes le Chateau and for his description of the area known as *Le Bordre de Doubt* (the edge of doubt); to Charles at Offshore Challenges for his assistance in understanding weather conditions off the coast of Cape Horn; to Joseph Turbeville (www.eyeofagiant.com) for his invaluable contributions concerning the geometry of the Great Pyramid; to Zecharia Sitchin, Bruce Cathie, Michael Tsarion (www.taroscopes.com), Lui diMartino (<http://homepage.ntworld.com/lggl007>), William Downey (www.thenewbiblecode.co.uk), Joe Mason and Dee Finney (www.greatdreams.com), Jay Weidner (www.jayweidner.com), Whitley Strieber (www.unknowncountry.com), Dr. Gary E. Schwartz (www.biofield.arizona.edu), Dr. Bruce Cornet (www.sunstar-solutions.com/AOP/esoteric/esoIntro.htm) Peter Gersten (www.pagenews.info), Joseph Campbell, Timothy Freke & Peter Gandy, Michael Drosnin, Gregg Braden, Margaret Starbird, Josef F. Blumrich, Michael Talbot, Geoff Stray, and many other authors and researchers whose works provided much inspiration and knowledge over the years; and to my friend, Susan McRae, for reading every chapter, one by one, as I finished them and who kept cracking the whip to get me to hurry up and finish the darned thing.

Note:

The “code” employed in this novel is based on the author’s research and discoveries involving the English alphabet, the mystery of the number 9, the phenomenon of letter/number synchronicity and

what the author calls CryptoNumerology, essentially a form of the coding and divination technique known from ancient times as gematria. The research and findings are presented in detail on his web site, SynchroniCity, at <http://hometown.aol.com/codeufo/gematria.html>.

THE EZEKIEL CODE

Prologue

December 15, 1999

Frank McClintock paced the floor and watched the clock as he waited for Professor Alan Kline to arrive. *He's late*, McClintock thought to himself. *He's never late for anything. Maybe I better call him.* As he reached for the phone the doorbell rang. He moved quickly across the room and opened the door. "Alan! Glad you could make it. Come on in."

"For crying out loud," the professor complained, trying to shake off the chill. "You know I hate driving in the snow. Why couldn't you just tell me about whatever it is over the phone? And when the hell did you get back? I thought you were planning to stay in France for another week."

McClintock took Kline's coat and laid it over the back of the couch. "I got back yesterday. I could have told you on the phone but there's something I wanted you to see. Sit down here by the fire and make yourself comfortable. I'll get us some coffee."

"Great," Kline said. "I'll take a drop of whiskey in mine if you've got it."

McClintock laughed. "Of course. How could I forget?"

"What'd you want me to see?" Kline asked, seating himself in one of the pair of antique wingback chairs in front of the fireplace.

"It's on the coffee table there in front of you." McClintock answered from the kitchen.

The professor looked down. A document folder was lying on the small coffee table in front of him. He put on his reading glasses, opened the folder and took out the fragile sheet of parchment. It was yellowed with age and the writing was faded but legible. He was studying it when McClintock returned from the kitchen with two cups of hot coffee, each spiked with a touch of whiskey.

McClintock settled into the other wingback chair facing the

professor. He sipped his coffee quietly, letting the professor absorb the content of the parchment.

After a few moments Kline removed his glasses and leaned back. He looked at McClintock. "Is this what I think it is?" he asked, completely astonished.

"Yup," McClintock replied with a slight grin.

"So the story is true?"

McClintock nodded. "I believe it is."

"Where the hell did you get this? I know you told me you thought it existed but I was beginning to think the whole strange story was a crock."

"Well," McClintock started, "you remember the reason I went to France was to meet with that other researcher that I'd been corresponding with by email?"

"Yes. Jacques somebody."

"Yes! Jacques de Pereille. He claimed to be related to Raimon de Pereille but hardly anyone believed him."

"I'm sorry," Kline said, shaking his head. "You'll have to refresh my memory."

McClintock set his coffee down and leaned forward in the chair. "Raimon de Pereille," he explained, "was the lord of Montségur!"

"Montségur?" Kline asked, not yet remembering this part of the long, complex story.

For the past several months McClintock had been pursuing what he suspected to be the facts behind an old myth. It was a story so unlikely that Professor Kline doubted any of it could be true. Whenever McClintock would discover some tidbit of information about the story he would call Kline and tell him what he'd learned. But now Kline's skepticism was being seriously challenged by the evidence he was holding in his own hands.

"Montségur was a huge castle," McClintock explained. "The last refuge for the Cathars back in the Middle Ages during the so-called Holy Inquisition. They were being hunted down and slaughtered like animals."

"Oh, right. Yes," Kline said. "I remember now."

McClintock sat back in his chair. "Anyway, like I said, this guy, Jacques, claimed to be related to the Lord of Montségur."

"And you believe he is?"

McClintock shrugged. "Well, I can't say for certain but I'm damn sure about one thing."

"What's that?"

"He's the one who gave me what you're holding in your hands right now."

Kline looked surprised. "He gave you this? He just handed it over to you? Why? Why would he do that?"

"Well, it wasn't quite like that. Not exactly, anyway."

Kline looked concerned. "What do you mean?"

"Well, here's what happened. I had a conversation with Jacques at a little cafe the previous day. He confided in me that he had what he believed to be the real thing in his possession. He said he'd show it to me if I wanted to come to his home the next day. Well, I wasn't sure if I believed him or not but I wasn't going to pass it up, just in case. And then he told me he thought some kind of an agent from the Vatican had been following him around for the past week or so. Well, that struck me as a bit of a stretch and I just sort of brushed it off. I figured maybe Jacques was just getting paranoid. You know, having a little flight of fancy that was maybe getting out of hand."

"The Vatican!" Kline scoffed. "Does seem a bit extreme."

"Exactly my reaction. It was just a little too extreme. Like I said, I just brushed it off at the time. But when I got to his home the next day I found the door wide open and the place had obviously been ransacked. Furniture turned over, drawers pulled out, stuff all over the place. A real mess. I called out for Jacques but there was no answer."

"My god. So what'd you do?"

"The first thing that went through my mind was what he'd told me about someone following him around. I figured if that was true - I mean if that's what this was all about - then they were probably looking for that parchment. Fortunately Jacques told me where he'd hidden it."

"I'm amazed he would tell anyone something like that," Kline said. "Why would he do that?"

McClintock nodded. "Yes, well, I think the reason he told me was because he trusted me and figured if anything should happen to him at least maybe I could get to it before anyone else did. He'd simply hidden it inside the backing of a cheap painting that hung on the wall in his bedroom. So I rushed into the bedroom and sure enough the

painting was hanging there, apparently untouched. I grabbed it from the wall and tore off the backing and there was the parchment just like he said. I shoved it under my coat and turned to get the hell out of there. That's when I saw Jacques on the floor. He was on the other side of the bed, laying in a pool of blood with a bullet hole in his head."

Kline sat straight up. "Dead?"

"As a doornail."

"Jesus! Could it have been a suicide?"

McClintock shook his head. "I doubt it. There was no gun anywhere to be seen."

"He was murdered?"

"That's the way it looked to me."

"Good Lord," Kline mumbled under his breath.

"Yeah."

"Did you go to the police?"

McClintock shook his head. "No, man. I was scared. I just got the hell out of there."

Kline looked seriously concerned now. "If this is all true, you could be in real danger."

McClintock nodded. "I know."

"Who else knows you have this?" Kline asked, laying the old parchment back on the table.

"Nobody. Just you."

"You're sure?"

"Pretty sure."

"Good," Kline replied, somewhat relieved. "If I were you I'd get rid of the damn thing and just forget about it."

McClintock swirled the coffee around in his cup a few times and looked up at his friend. "I can't," he said. "I've come so far. I'm this close. I can't let it go now. You know what I mean?"

Kline shook his head. "I figured as much," he said, getting up and walking over to the couch to get his coat. "Look, I gotta go. Got an early morning class and I promised the students an energetic lecture they'd be crazy to miss. But please, call me later tomorrow, will you? We need to talk about this. Seriously."

"All right," McClintock agreed, seeing his friend to the door.

A light snow was still falling as Kline made his way across the

yard toward the street. Suddenly a black van pulled out from the curb in front of the house. The driver seemed to be in a hurry as the van fishtailed down the icy street.

Kline turned to look back toward the house. McClintock was still standing in the open doorway. Kline hollered, "Who was that?"

McClintock shrugged it off. "I don't know. Vatican spooks?" he joked.

Kline didn't laugh. "You call me tomorrow!"

"Don't worry!" McClintock assured him with a wave as he closed the door against the cold night.

But the professor was indeed worried. He shivered. A bullet hole in the head – even if it's someone else's head - should make a person worry. The next day he waited for McClintock's call but it never came. Ever.

THE EZEKIEL CODE

A Metaphysical/Mystery/Adventure Thriller

Part 1: Turning Point

*And a voice spoke unto me saying,
this miracle is for a generation yet to come.
A son of man bearing your name will come
in the days of that generation and to him will be given
the knowledge to understand the mystery.*

— From the Lost Scroll of Ezekiel

GARY VAL TENUTA

~1~

October, 2005

Once in a while, as we go about our daily routines, something happens that just doesn't fit the program, something so out of the ordinary that it stops us in our tracks and makes us wonder. For Zeke Banyon, this was going to be one of those days.

There was a heavy mist in the air, typical for late Fall in Seattle. Out in the suburbs the fallen leaves covered the lawns. But here, in the lower end of the downtown streets by the waterfront, there were no leaves and no lawns. This was the world of old bricks and mortar, concrete and cement.

Down on First Avenue the homeless were seeking shelter. The Seattle Gospel Mission – a shelter for the homeless - had taken in just about as many as could be accommodated as one wet and bedraggled soul after another straggled in through the door.

Zeke Banyon - who once studied for the priesthood - now managed the establishment. A few of the people who frequented the shelter knew about his short stint as a seminary student and insisted on calling him Father Banyon. In truth, he was just an ordinary man who eventually earned a degree in social work and had a gift for carpentry and wood carving. He hand-carved a little sign to hang in the window of the shelter's weathered entrance door. One side read:

C'MON INN!

On this day that side of the sign had just about done its job. The other side read:

SORRY, NO ROOM AT THE INN

As evening settled in he was just about to turn the NO ROOM side toward the street when the door burst open. At first he thought it was the

wind and maybe it was, but it blew in one more customer; an old black gentleman bundled up in a moth-eaten Navy peacoat. He carried a tattered guitar case in one hand and in the other hand he toted a plastic bag containing an extra pair of socks, a ball of string, and a transistor radio. They called him Old Tom.

Old Tom was a bit of a fixture on the streets around town, playing music on the corner by the Farmer's Market where passersby would typically drop a pittance of change into his guitar case. Once in a while a dollar bill would appear. On a good day he could make five dollars. Maybe six. Zeke Banyon had often been one of those passersby. Sometimes one or two of those dollars in Old Tom's guitar case were from Banyon's own pocket.

"Evenin', Father" Tom said with a voice that sounded like he gargled with gravel. "Got room for one more?"

"Hey, Tom. Sure. On one condition."

"Whaddya mean?"

Banyon nodded toward the guitar case.

"What?" Tom said. "I gotta leave it outside?"

Banyon laughed. "Hell no! Get that thing out of the case and play us a tune. If it's any good maybe I'll let you stay for a meal."

Tom looked relieved. Grinning under the dripping brim of a dirty old Seattle Mariner baseball cap, he replied, "Thanks, Father. Anything special you wanna hear?"

Shutting the old wooden door against the persistent wind, Banyon rubbed his clean-shaven chin and thought a moment. "Yeah," he said. "How about *Just A Closer Walk With Thee*?" He was joking, of course, since he was pretty sure that wasn't exactly Tom's type of music. Tom was a blues-man, *plain an' simple*, as Tom liked to say about himself.

"You got it, Father," was Tom's reply.

Thinking Tom was just putting him on, Banyon laughed and headed toward the kitchen. There he busied himself, helping a couple of the volunteers who were preparing the soup of the day and slicing the few loaves of bread donated by a local supermarket. Suddenly he heard the sweet slow sound of a true blues-man's guitar and the gravely voice of a man who'd seen it all. Banyon couldn't believe his ears. It was the most soulful rendition of *Just A Closer Walk With Thee* he'd ever heard. *Man*, he thought to himself, *they don't play it like that*

in church. But the moment was interrupted by the sound of a woman's voice calling his name.

"Father Banyon?" came the voice again.

He dropped what he was doing and hurried out to see who it was.

He found her standing just inside the front door. Judging from her appearance he doubted she was another homeless person. The attractive young lady was nicely dressed in new blue denim pants with a matching blue parka zipped snugly up to the neck. She folded her umbrella and brushed her blond, wind-swept hair out of her face. He thought she looked somewhat familiar but he wasn't sure why. He was certain he'd never actually met her before.

"Yes?" he said. "I'm Banyon. Can I help you?"

"I'm Angela Martin," she said, but she could see it didn't ring a bell. "Angela Martin. From the college? I talked with you on the phone a few days ago about working here part time. You said I should come see you today."

"Oh! Yes, I remember. I'm sorry. I get so busy around here. Come in. I have an office in the back. Let me take your coat and umbrella".

The office was not much more than a converted storage room with a desk, a bookshelf and a typewriter. It was the typewriter that first drew her attention.

"Wow," she grinned. "A typewriter!"

"What's so unusual about that?" he asked.

"Well, I..." she hesitated. "I just haven't seen one of those in a long time. Everybody uses computers now."

Banyon laughed. "Yeah, well you know. I'm just a bit out of touch with the modern age I guess. Have a seat, Miss..."

"Martin. But call me Angela. Or Angel if you like. People call me Angel all the time." Then she smiled. "But seeing as how you're a priest, you can probably tell I'm no angel!"

Settling himself down in the chair behind his desk, he feigned a rather devilish grin and looked around as if to make sure no one was listening to their conversation. "I'll let you in on a little secret," he said. Leaning slightly toward her over the top of his desk - which was covered with a pile of papers and books - he whispered, "I'm not really a priest either."

Angela wasn't sure if he was serious or not. It was the last thing she expected him to say. "Excuse me?" she said, eyebrows raised.

He reached into his desk drawer and pulled out a pack of cigarettes. "Mind if I smoke?" he asked.

The question caught her off guard. "What? No, of course not. In fact I was just going to ask you the same thing."

He smiled and held the pack out to her. "Have one of mine?"

"Sure. Thanks." She pulled a cigarette from the pack and looked at it. "Menthol?" She chuckled. "Candy cigarettes. Haven't had one of these in years."

Banyon produced an ashtray from beneath the stack of papers in front of him and set it on the desk. He offered a match but she had already fished a lighter from her purse.

"So," she said, picking up the conversation, "were you kidding about not really being a priest? I mean, you are Father Banyon, aren't you?"

Banyon studied his lighted cigarette, rolling it between his fingers. "I almost became Father Banyon. Now I'm just plain ol' Zeke Banyon."

"Zeke?"

"Short for Ezekiel. But, come on, who wants to be called Ezekiel? You think I didn't get teased about that when I was a kid? Hah! Of course it didn't help any that I was in Catholic school to boot. When my mother was pregnant with me my dad said if the baby was a boy, he liked Rick for a name. Now that would have been just great with me!"

"So Ezekiel was your mother's idea and she won the name-the-baby contest?"

Banyon laughed. "Something like that. Actually, what happened was my mom liked the name Rick just fine until the night before I was born."

"What happened?"

Banyon couldn't believe the conversation had gotten this far with a complete stranger, let alone that he was about to tell her something he'd told only three or four close friends in his entire life. *Oh, what the hell. She's smoking one of my cigarettes. We're practically old friends.* "Well," he began, "it's kind of weird." He took a drag from his cigarette. "The night before I was born she dreamed she saw me as a grown man and someone was calling me Ezekiel. When she woke up the next morning she kept obsessing about the dream. So anyway..."

he hesitated for a moment, looking a little embarrassed, "...being a good Catholic and all, she convinced herself it was some kind of a divine message - or something - and insisted that if the baby turned out to be a boy it had to be named Ezekiel. Dad wasn't real thrilled with the name but, as usual, he gave in to mom's desire."

Angela found that amusing but she was still puzzled about his background. "So, I don't get it. You mean you used to be a priest but now you're not?"

"Oh, it's kind of a long story and not all that interesting really. But how about you? Tell me something about yourself. Married? Kids?"

"I was married," she said, lowering her eyes for a moment. "My husband died a few years ago from a heart attack. It was totally out of the blue. Completely unexpected. We had no children."

"I'm very sorry," Banyon said.

Angela reached for the ashtray and crushed out her cigarette. "I thought my life was over. You know what I mean? There was just this big empty hole in my life. Believe me, I was teetering on the edge. And then one day I don't know what happened. I can't explain it. I just woke up one morning and realized I was still alive. It was like an amazing revelation."

Banyon smiled. "I think I understand."

"Well, so there I was. Thirty-three years old with a new life ahead of me but I just didn't know what to do with it. Then I had an idea. Although it seemed kind of silly at first."

"What was that?"

"I thought maybe I should go back to school. In a way, I thought it was probably the nuttiest thing I could have come up with. I mean, at my age and all. But the thing is, years ago I did want to go to college to study anthropology. I probably would have if I hadn't gotten married."

"Anthropology!" Banyon exclaimed. "That's interesting."

"Well, see," she continued, "I was a National Geographic addict. I just loved that stuff. Especially the ancient cultures. So anyway, the more I thought about it, the more I was intrigued by the possibility even though I was pretty darned nervous about going back to school. I mean, not only was I worried that maybe I couldn't cut it but I could just picture myself as the *old lady* in a class full of *twentysomethings*. That was a frightening concept."

Banyon nodded and smiled. "I can imagine! But I have to tell you, you look a heck of a lot closer to twenty-three than thirty-three!" As soon as he said it he wished he hadn't. Not that it wasn't true. She looked great. He was just afraid it sounded like a stupid attempt at flirting – something he wasn't very good at even when it was intentional.

Angela smiled, a bit embarrassed. "Well, thank you. I do what I can."

"I'm sorry," Banyon said, clearing his throat. "I didn't mean to interrupt you."

Angela shifted in her chair. "Oh, that's all right," she said. "Anyway, a friend of mine insisted that a lot of people my age were taking classes in the community colleges. So I got up the nerve, and signed up for my first two classes on my way to a two-year degree. That was about six months ago and I'm loving every minute of it. But I needed a little extra cash so I thought a part time job would be a good idea. Then I saw the help wanted notice you placed on the bulletin board at the college and so here I am." She paused and laughed. "You know, even the guy who runs the student employment office at the college thought you were a priest."

Banyon laughed. "Well, there you go. I can't get away from it!"

Now, as he sat there staring at her, it dawned on him why she looked so familiar. "Did anyone ever tell you that you look just like Meg Ryan?"

Meg Ryan was one of the few pop-culture icons that stuck in his mind. He didn't usually pay much attention to that kind of thing. He wasn't much of a TV-watcher. He'd certainly never seen *Access Hollywood* or *Inside Edition*, and he hadn't actually been to a movie since – well, since *Harry Met Sally*. In fact it was probably the famous orgasmic restaurant scene in that movie with Billy Crystal and Meg Ryan that earned Ms. Ryan a special place in the back of Banyon's mind.

The comment took Angela by surprise. "Who, me?"

"Oh, never mind," he said, thinking the comparison was probably a stupid thing to mention. *Strike two*, he thought to himself. "I admire what you've done, going back to school and all. So, hey, you're hired."

"I am? I mean... I am?" Angela stuttered at the sudden announcement. "I mean, I'm not even sure what it is you need me to do. The help-wanted notice didn't really say."

Banyon smiled. He pushed his chair back from his desk and nodded toward the huge pile of miscellaneous stuff that covered it. "If

you don't mind, you could start by doing an archaeological dig through this ancient mess and see if it can be organized into some kind of order."

Angela laughed. "I'm studying to be an anthropologist, not an archaeologist."

"By the time you get through this," he said with a wink, "you'll be an archaeologist, too. You can start tomorrow." He took another look at his desk. "Maybe you should bring a shovel."

She grinned. *Tall, dark, handsome, and a sense of humor*, she thought to herself. *Not bad*. She caught herself wondering if he was married but she didn't think it would be appropriate to ask. She didn't even think it was appropriate to be thinking about it. Since her husband had died she hadn't given a second thought to the idea of another man in her life. Whenever such a thought tried to squeeze its way in she shut it out immediately. It was a guilt thing. At the moment, however, her thoughts were causing her more embarrassment than guilt. *Is that a good thing?* She wondered.

Banyon walked her down the hall to the front door where they stood talking for a few moments. They were oblivious to the presence of a man just a few paces to their left in the main lounge area. The man looked like any of the other down-and-outers off the street just trying to get warm. He was huddled over in one of the well-worn overstuffed chairs, seemingly minding his own business. But this down-and-outer had something up his sleeve. Literally. Shielding his mouth with his hand he spoke quietly and covertly into his sleeve. "Get ready. She's coming out."

"Thank you Father," Angela said, shaking Banyon's hand.

"Please," he said, "just call me Zeke."

"Okay, Father," she chuckled as she opened her umbrella and headed out the door into the mist. She turned back just briefly, peeking out from under the umbrella. "By the way," she said, grinning, "you look a little like one of the Baldwin brothers."

The moment she turned back to the sidewalk a man in a black van across the street made a quick adjustment to the telephoto lens on his 35mm Nikon. He managed to click off two good close-ups of Angela's face before her umbrella blocked his view.

Banyon called out to her. "Who the heck are the Baldwin brothers?"

But she was already on her way up the street and couldn't hear him. As he leaned out the door and watched her disappear into the night a gust of wind blew a lock of his thick black hair down into his eyes. He brushed it back and was about to close the door when the man with the wire up his sleeve quickly squeezed by him with his hat pulled down and his collar turned up to hide his face.

"Pardon me," the man mumbled under his collar as he hastily made his exit.

"Quite all right," Banyon said, stepping aside. Then he closed the door and headed off toward the kitchen. *Yup*, he thought to himself, *I love Meg Ryan. I have a feeling this is going to work out well. Who the heck are the Baldwin brothers?*

As he passed the storage room on his way to the kitchen he glanced up at the clock on the wall. He had developed a habit of checking the clock against his watch whenever he passed by. The time on the clock at that moment was exactly 9 p.m. He stopped in his tracks. *What? Wait a minute.* He checked his watch. It showed 6 o'clock. He knew his watch was right because he remembered noticing it was 5 o'clock when Angela came in for the interview. The interview, he was pretty certain, took just about an hour. That would indeed make it now about 6 o'clock. *That's odd*, he thought. *The clock must have stopped this morning.* Then he thought again. *No, that can't be. When I passed by it at noon I remember the hands were straight up at the 12, right where they should have been. So it was working fine. How could it get from 12 o'clock to 9 o'clock when it's really only 6 o'clock?* It didn't make sense. He got a chair to stand on, reached up, removed the clear plastic cover, and moved the hands back to the correct time. He stepped down, took another look at it, and shrugged it off. *Very strange*, he thought to himself as he headed off toward the kitchen. *Very strange.*

What he didn't know at the moment was that something much stranger was still waiting to happen. Pieces of a puzzle – a puzzle he didn't even know existed - were moving into place. The great mandala was in motion. The wheels of destiny were turning. And like the hands on the clock that go round and round, it was just a matter of time.

THE ~2~ EZEKIEL

It didn't take long for Banyon and Angela to establish a comfortable work routine although that comfort zone did have a slight glitch in it. There seemed to be some sort of undefinable tension between them. It wasn't even really negative or disruptive in any way. It was just there, lurking in the background. Neither of them, of course, could be certain that the other was experiencing this feeling so they kept it to themselves and tried to ignore it.

Angela's job turned out to be a kind of Gal-Friday position, helping Banyon in nearly every aspect of running the shelter. They worked well together although they hardly ever talked about their personal lives and Angela still didn't know for sure whether or not he was married.

As far as Banyon was concerned, things were going wonderfully. For the first time in what seemed like years, he even got to see the top of his desk. That, in fact, is what triggered the first step into the strange journey upon which, unbeknownst to either of them, he and Angela were about to embark.

The actual desktop hadn't seen daylight for a long time, or so one would suspect, judging by the clutter of papers, pamphlets, and what-not that had accumulated over time. Perhaps it had been cleared off once or twice but, if so, no one - not even Banyon - had bothered to change the oversized desk-pad calendar hidden beneath the mess.

According to the current calendar on the wall, the present date was Sunday, October 26, 2005. The desk-pad calendar, however, was still at May, 2001. Apparently the former director had never bothered to change the calendar on the desk-pad and, oddly enough until this very day, it had completely escaped Banyon's attention.

Banyon didn't really know much about the former director, a Reverend *somebody*. But, whoever he was, he was a doodler. The pad was filled with quickly scratched notes and phone numbers and curious little scribbles. And something else. Another thing to which

Banyon had previously paid no attention. Not surprising, really, given that the desk had been covered with clutter for God knows how long. But now, as he studied the odd little doodles, his attention was drawn to the numbers and letters randomly scribbled all over the pad. Up toward the top of the pad someone - presumably the former director - had written the alphabet and had numbered each letter consecutively, 1 through 26, starting with A and finishing with Z. Then Banyon noticed a lot of words randomly scattered around on the pad. Each word had a number just below each of its letters. Glancing back at the alphabet at the top of the pad he realized the numbers below the letters in the words corresponded to the numbered letters in the alphabet. Apparently someone had been converting the words to numbers. *But why?* he wondered.

Now that he thought about it, he remembered seeing this before, probably in a book somewhere. *Numerology*, he mused.

Banyon didn't know much about numerology but he remembered thinking it was just a silly curiosity, something about as useful as astrology which, of course, was all poppycock and balderdash, as his mother used to say to his father whenever his father read the daily horoscope in the morning paper.

Now, looking at the scribbling on the deskpads, Banyon was amused that someone had apparently been at least somewhat serious about this numerology thing. That struck him as odd, especially if it was the former director, a man of the Cloth. At that moment something caught his eye. Off to the side of the pad he saw his own name. It wasn't referring to him personally. It was a reference to a character out of the Bible. The words, scratched out in dark blue ink, read:

THE WHEEL OF EZEKIEL = 180 = 9

Obviously, it was a reference to the book of Ezekiel in the Bible where the prophet Ezekiel recounts his vision of an object coming out of the sky. The scripture describes part of the object as a *wheel within a wheel* and Ezekiel believed it to be a manifestation of the glory of the Lord.

Using the alphanumeric table at the top of the pad, Banyon carefully did the math for himself. Sure enough, the sum of the letters in the phrase was 180. What he didn't understand was how 180 equaled 9. He studied it for a moment and it occurred to him that if the

digits in 180 were added together the sum would be 9. *Maybe that's it. But, so what?* Still, he couldn't resist the temptation to see what number his own name might come to. He printed his name on the pad just below the words, THE WHEEL OF EZEKIEL, and did the math:

EZEKIEL BANYON = 144 = 9

That raised his eyebrows but his silent musings were interrupted by a knock at his office door.

"Come in," he called.

"Mr. Banyon? Am I disturbing you?"

"Angela! What a surprise! Come in, please. You don't work on weekends. What brings you in here on this beautiful Sunday afternoon?"

Typical for Seattle, the weather had changed from a week of clouds and rain to a nice, almost warm, sunny day.

With her denim jacket draped over her arm, Angela, looked amazingly attractive in a pink turtleneck sweater and blue jeans. She scooted a chair over to a spot just in front of Banyon's desk and lit up a cigarette. "I was at the main library downtown looking for some research material for one of my classes. Anyway, since I was in the neighborhood I thought I'd stop and say hi."

"Well, I'm glad you did. Hey, check this out." He showed her the date on the calendar pad. "It hasn't been changed since 2001!"

Angela laughed. "Wow. I'm sorry. I didn't notice that when I cleaned off your desk. I would have mentioned it."

"Oh, no, it's not that!" he grinned. "I just thought it was amusing." He pulled the calendar sheet out from the deskpad and was about to toss it in the wastebasket when he remembered the curious alphanumeric that were scribbled on it. He hesitated a moment and then handed it over to Angela. "By the way," he asked, "have you ever seen anything like this?" He pointed to the letters and numbers.

She studied it for a moment. "Um... well, yes. Looks like someone was playing around with numerology. Why? Are you interested in numerology?"

"Oh, I don't know anything about it, really. But look at this." He pointed to his name and the phrase about Ezekiel. "Isn't that a coincidence? They both equal 9 if you -"

"Yes," she interrupted. "If you cross-add the digits."

"Cross-add?"

“Yes, it’s called cross-adding. It’s what you do in numerology.”

“So you know something about numerology?”

She shrugged. “Not much. I had a book on it once. Just a used paperback I happened to find in a thriftstore a couple years ago. I might still have it. I could look for it if you want.”

“So what’s the deal with it? I mean I imagine the numbers are supposed to have some kind of meanings attached to them?”

“As I recall, yes.”

Banyon chuckled. “So what does the number nine mean?”

She handed the calendar back to him and smiled. “I don’t know. But isn’t this the kind of thing priests are supposed to stay away from?”

“Well, like I told you before, I’m not really a priest.”

“Yes, you did say that. What happened? I don’t mean to be nosey. Just kind of curious. Unless you don’t want to talk about it.”

“No, I don’t mind. It’s just the ol’ twists and turns of life, you know. I started to study for the priesthood some years ago but one day I met this woman and that sort of changed everything, if you know what I mean.”

Angela’s stomach tensed up. *Well, now I know.* She forced a smile.

“Hey, I fell in love!” he said with a grin. “That’s pretty much the long and the short of it.”

“I see. So you gave up the church and got married?”

“Yup. It’s funny. It was both the easiest decision I’ve ever made and, at the same time, really difficult. My mother was beside herself. It was mostly her idea for me to become a priest. I don’t think my dad really cared that much.”

“So they were both Catholic?”

“My mother was a devout Catholic and my dad converted to Catholicism shortly after they got married. But I think he did it mostly just to please her.” He paused for a moment and laughed. “Needless to say, Karen and my mother never hit it off real well but my dad thought she was terrific.”

“Your wife’s name is Karen?”

“Was,” he replied solemnly.

Angela hesitated, puzzled. *Was?* She didn’t know if she should ask but her curiosity got the best of her. “You’re divorced?”

Again, Banyon couldn’t believe he was spilling out his whole life-

story to this person he hardly knew. After all, she'd only wandered in the other day to apply for a job. Still, there was something about her. She was easy to talk to and he felt unusually drawn to her for some reason. "Karen died in a car accident three years ago," he explained. "We'd only been married for three years before it happened."

There was a sudden pause in the conversation. Not an uncomfortable one. Time just seemed to stand still for a moment as the past few years of his life ran through his mind. Angela was having her own private moment and didn't even really notice the void in the conversation.

"Anyway," he said, "The short time I spent at seminary did provide me with a direction. I went to school and got a degree in social work and eventually got a job as a counselor at a shelter for battered women. But after Karen died I just couldn't do it anymore. To make a long story short, I basically just started wasting my days not doing much of anything until an old friend of mine, Father Caldwell, came to see me and sort of gave me a motivational kick in the ass, if you know what I mean."

Angela smiled and Banyon went on. "He told me the homeless shelter here was in need of a new director and it's worked out pretty well. I like it here. I'm helping people in some small way. It's good. And, see, the deal is, a rumor got started on the street that I was, in fact, a priest." He gave a short laugh as he thought back on it. "These homeless people started coming in and calling me Father Banyon. I kind of liked it but I felt a little guilty about it at first. Anyway, the name just sort of stuck and that's why everyone around here calls me Father Banyon. It works," he chuckled. "So I just figured, what the hell."

Angela was amused by the story and felt a little guilty that she found some pleasure in knowing he was... available. She looked at him across the desk. His deep brown eyes seemed to draw her in. "I see," she said. "I'm sorry about your wife. I know what it's like. I mean I know what you were going through."

He nodded, recalling Angela's own story about losing her husband.

Angela sensed that he was feeling a bit uncomfortable. "Well," she said, graciously changing the subject. "So you want me to look for that book?"

"Book?"

"The numerology book."

"Oh! Sure. What the heck. I'm curious now."

"Okay, I'll look for it tonight."

"Great! Hey, what are you doing for dinner?"

The question surprised her. *Oh my god. A date?* The very thought scared her. She shrugged, trying to appear unmoved. "Warmed up leftovers, probably."

"Oh, come on! How about having an award-winning pizza with me at Mario's down the street? My treat."

Angela tightened up. *Is he just being friendly? What's happening?* Then she shook her head. "Thanks, but I think I should probably just head home. I have a lot of homework to get done before class tomorrow morning."

Banyon smiled, trying not to show his disappointment. "All right. Maybe another time."

Angela stood up to leave and Banyon walked her out to the front door. Glancing out, they could see the evening sun had vanished behind the tall buildings leaving a sharp chill in the air.

"Oh!" she said. "My jacket. I must have left it in your office."

"Wait here," he told her. "I'll get it."

He walked into his office and found her jacket hanging on the back of the chair. He picked it up not realizing, at that moment, a folded piece of paper slipped from the pocket and settled just under the chair. He returned to find Angela waiting for him at the front door.

"Here you go," he said, helping her on with the jacket.

"Thanks Father."

"Ahem!"

She smiled, teasingly. "Zeke."

"There you go," he said with a grin. "See you tomorrow afternoon?"

"I'll be here."

He watched her walk up the street and then called out to her, "Bring the book if you find it!"

"I will!" she said, turning just briefly to wave goodbye.

Back in his office, he took another look at the curious scribbles on the desk pad. He still didn't know what to make of it. After finishing a few minutes of bookwork he decided to take himself up on his own offer of Pizza at Mario's. His treat.

He donned his coat and pushed Angela's chair back to where it had been, next to the wall. Looking down, he noticed the small piece of paper on the floor. He picked it up, unfolded it and recognized Angela's handwriting. It was a simple note:

Seattle Gospel Mission

198 Post Street

He figured it wasn't important. *Probably just a note to herself*, he decided. He crumpled it up, tossed it into the wastebasket and headed off to Mario's.

Sitting alone at a table by the window, staring out at the darkened street, waiting for his double pepperoni pizza with extra cheese, his wandering thoughts suddenly came to a screeching halt.

"198 Post Street? 198?" he muttered aloud. "One plus nine, plus eight is... um... eighteen, and one plus eight is -"

"Nine," the waitress said as she delivered the pizza to his table.

"What?" he said, a little startled. He hadn't noticed her approaching.

She laughed. "I'm sorry. I just happened to hear you doing some math."

He looked at her as if she had just said something profound. "It is nine, isn't it?"

"Unless they've changed it," she chuckled. "You never know with all that so-called new math and all."

He barely caught the joke. He wasn't really listening. His mind was on the address of the building where he worked. *What the hell is this?* he thought to himself. *Got to be just one of those odd coincidences, all this nine stuff.*

He removed a slice of pizza from the platter. Just as he was about to take a bite, he looked down at the rest of the pizza. He counted the number of slices. There were seven on the platter and one in his hand. *That's eight*, he smiled to himself. Then, aloud, he said, "Damn good thing!"

"Glad you like it," the waitress said as she passed by his table with an armload of dishes.

But again he wasn't paying attention. He was still thinking about that *nine thing*. He thought back to the incident with the clock on the wall... all the words and phrases with *nines* on the calendar pad...

now the street address of the shelter. He chuckled to himself, amused by the string of coincidences. *Weird*, he thought. *Why is this happening? What does it mean?*

~3~

Hey there, Tom!” Angela said as she walked in the front door of the shelter. “How are you on this fine Monday afternoon?”

Old Tom, the African-American bluesman, was sitting on the floor putting a new string on his guitar. “What’s so fine about it?” he grumbled without looking up. “It’s Monday. I hate Mondays.”

Angela laughed. “Really! And why is that? I would think one day is about the same as another for a free spirit like yourself.”

“Free spirit? Me?” he said, still not looking up as he twisted a tuning peg on the guitar. He plucked a couple of strings and tilted his head, listening intently to see if they were in tune. “Ain’t nothin’ free, lady. Not even my spirit. And I’ll tell you what’s wrong with Mondays.” He looked up at her as if he were about to let her in on something at least as important as the state of the economy or global warming. “All they serve here on Mondays is bean soup.”

Angela laughed. “And what’s wrong with that?” she asked. “I hear it’s pretty good and hey... it’s free!”

“Not hardly,” he said, returning attention to his guitar.

“Not hardly what? Not hardly good or not hardly free?”

“Both,” he grumbled. “Well, okay, it ain’t bad but it ain’t free.”

“What do you mean?”

He looked up at her again. “You ever spend a night in a room full of people who all had bean soup for dinner? If that ain’t a price to pay, I don’t know what is.”

“I see,” she chuckled. “Not that I’m not enjoying this pleasant conversation but, just to change the subject, have you seen Zeke today?”

"Father Banyon? He's been holed up in his office all day. Not like him. Maybe he ain't feelin' good or somethin'."

"Really? Well I'm going to go check on him."

As she headed down the hall toward Banyon's office she could hear Tom singing a blues version of the old Carpenter's tune, *Rainy Days And Mondays*. But he, of course, changed the words. She distinctly heard him crooning, "*Bean soup and Mondays always get me down*".

She knocked on Banyon's door. "Zeke?"

"Angela! Come in!"

She walked in and found him sitting at his desk holding what looked like a beaded necklace in his hands.

"Close the door and pull up a chair," he said. He draped the object over his hand and held it up for her to see. "Do you know what this is?"

"Um, yeah, it's a rosary, isn't it? Catholics use them to say prayers or something. Right?"

"Something like that, yes," he said, staring at the rosary as he slowly rolled it around between his fingers. "You know what the address of this building is?"

"Sure," she said, puzzled as to why he would ask. "198 Post Street."

"Add that up," he said, still fiddling with the rosary.

"Add what up?"

"The numbers in the address. You know. Cross adding, like you told me."

She thought for a moment. "Um... eighteen."

He finally looked up at her but he didn't say anything.

"Oh," she said. "One plus eight. It's nine."

He stood up, rosary in hand, and turned, gazing blankly out the window behind his desk. "Remember the alphanumeric value of my name?"

"Um," she hesitated. "I don't remember. But I remember it reduced to nine. So what are you getting at?"

Still staring out the window, he asked, "You know what my birthday is?"

Angela shrugged. "You want me to guess?"

"No. I'll tell you. It's September the 9th, 1962."

"So?"

“So, think about it. What’s September? It’s the ninth month. I was born on the ninth day of the ninth month.”

Angela lit a cigarette and shifted in her chair. “You’re not getting weird on me, are you?”

Banyon returned to his chair. “You know what the digits in 1962 add up to? I’ll tell you. They add up to eighteen.”

“Reduces to nine,” Angela said, beating him to the punch.

“Exactly. My birthday is nine, nine, nine.”

“What are you telling me?” she asked. “You *are* getting weird on me, aren’t you?”

“You know your Bible very well?”

“Not as well as you, I’m sure,” she said, grinning. “Why?”

“The Book of Revelation. Thirteenth chapter, eighteenth verse. *Eighteenth verse!* Keep that in mind.”

“Got it. Eighteen. Reduces to nine.”

“Right. Now hang on a second.” He reached into the desk drawer and pulled out a Bible. He opened it to Revelation, 13th chapter, 18th verse and read aloud. “*Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast. For it is the number of a man. And his number is six hundred threescore and six.*”

“Oh, yeah,” Angela said. “I remember. The Antichrist. Six, six, six.”

There was a moment of silence as he let that sink into her head.

“Oh!” she said. “Three sixes is eighteen which reduces to nine!”

Banyon smiled. “Right. And my birthday is nine, nine, nine.”

“Yes? And?” Angela replied, not sure where he was going with this.

“Think about it, Angela. Visualize those two sets of numbers in your mind. Three nines is three sixes upside down!”

She gave him a sideways glance. “Um, you’re not going to tell me you’re the Antichrist, are you?”

He laughed. “No, I don’t think that’s likely. But you have to admit it’s all a bit strange, isn’t it? I mean, an ex-priest with a Biblical name whose birth date is the number of the Beast upside down? I mean, what are the odds? Let me bum a cigarette.”

She slid her Marlboro’s across the desk. “Well,” she said, “you’re not really an ex-priest, remember? You have to actually *become* a priest before you can become an *ex*-priest. But I’ll admit it’s curious

all right. So what do you think it all means? Couldn't it just be coincidence?"

"That's what I kept trying to tell myself. But as I studied that verse in Revelation I kept thinking about the coincidence of the number eighteen. You know? The eighteenth verse? So I thought, well if the number eighteen has something to do with this, maybe the number *thirteen* does too.

"Thirteen?"

Banyon nodded impatiently. "Yes!" he said. "Thirteenth chapter! So, anyway, guess what I found?"

"I can't imagine."

"Look here," he said, motioning for her to scoot her chair up closer so she could see what he was writing. He scribbled out the equation: $13 \times 18 = 234$. "See that?" he asked, tapping it with his pencil.

"Yeah... oh! Two plus three, plus four is nine!"

"But that's not all," he said. "I didn't know what 234 could mean, if anything. Other than being another *nine* number, it didn't seem overtly significant."

"Overtly significant," she repeated.

He glanced up at her, not sure if maybe she was mocking him. He cleared his throat and continued. "But I was thinking about the mirror images of the three sixes and the three nines. And, I don't know, it just occurred to me to reverse the 234 which of course is 432."

"So?"

"So, guess what 234 plus 432 is?"

Angela did the math in her head. "Oh man! It's 666!"

Banyon smiled. "Bingo! The number 666 is encoded in the very numbers of the chapter and verse in which the number of the beast is mentioned! Whaddya think about that?" Before she could answer, he went on. "Then last night while looking for something in my closet I came across this." He handed her the rosary. "I've had that for years. It's a standard rosary. Nothing special about it, but check it out. Look how the beads are arranged on each strand. Every rosary is like that."

Angela examined the rosary. She found that each strand consisted of beads strung in a pattern of five groups of ten beads, with a single bead in the space between each of the five groups for a total of 54 beads.

"Well...?" Banyon said, prompting her for a comment.

"Fifty-four," she said in a rather bewildered tone. "Nine."

The look on her face made him chuckle. "Yes," he said, finally. "Nine."

"Does this mean something?" she asked.

"Hah!" he laughed. "That, my dear, is the question that kept me up all night. What the hell does this mean?"

"Oh!" she blurted suddenly. "I almost forgot!" She reached into her purse and pulled out a tattered old paperback book. "Here you go," she said, handing it to him.

"You found it!" he said excitedly as he read the title. "*NUMEROLOGY: A Beginner's Guide*. Cool! Can I hang on to this for a while?"

"Sure. Keep it as long as you want. But right now I have to get going. It's getting late."

He thanked her for the book and started to get up from his chair.

"Don't get up," she insisted with a smile. "I can see myself out."

"You sure?"

"Yup. I'll see you tomorrow afternoon."

As soon as she was gone he sensed something, something he hadn't noticed before in the comfortable confines of his shabby little office. It took him a minute to realize what it was. Rather than sensing the presence of something, it was more like the absence of something. He looked around. Nothing seemed to be missing. As he thought about it, he slowly began to recognize what he was feeling. For the first time in a long time - a very long time - he was aware of being alone. *I'll be damned*, he thought to himself as he glanced at the chair where, just moments ago, Angela had been sitting. *I'll be damned*.

That night Banyon settled into bed with a cup of herbal tea, a note pad, a pencil, and the book he borrowed from Angela. He found the book interesting but somewhat disappointing. It didn't provide the kind of information he was hoping for. He was anticipating something a little deeper, maybe even profound. Then again, it was exactly what the book's subtitle said it was: *a beginner's guide*. Still, he was left with the impression that the author of this book approached the whole subject as if it were not much more than just a form of entertainment. As recently as only a few days ago he would have agreed. But now, given his recent experience with the strange coincidences regarding

the numbers, especially the number nine, he wasn't so sure. The book did, however, provide some interesting tidbits of information about the number nine and the symbolism attributed to it. He learned, for example, that the number 9 is often considered to represent the planet Mars as well as the idea of conflict or aggression and also represents male energy. Curiously - but as he probably should have expected - the number 6 was the opposite of 9. The number 6 represented female energy, love and the planet Venus.

He was starting to get a feel for this numbers thing in a way that struck him as odd. He couldn't really explain it but he was feeling as if he could almost sense if a word had some connection to this whole *weird nine thing*, as he now called it. He had that feeling when he read about the comparisons between the number 9 and the number 6 and the planets they represented. It was becoming instinctive. He was immediately compelled to calculate the alphanumeric value of the names of the planets, *Mars* and *Venus*. He was amazed at what he found. *Another one of those reversal things*, he mused to himself.

The word *Mars*, he figured out, had an alphanumeric value of 51, which reduced to 6. On the other hand the word *Venus* had a value of 81 which reduced to 9. *Interesting*, he thought. *The planet symbolized by the number 9 has the alphanumeric value of 6, while the planet symbolized by the number 6 has the alphanumeric value of 9.* As he pondered over this curiosity, he could hardly wait to tell Angela about it. He read a little more until his eyes grew tired and he soon drifted off to sleep with the book in his lap.

As he slept he had no idea that somewhere in the world men in positions of power were talking about him – and about Angela. One of those men – a man in priest's clothing – was looking at the snapshot of Angela. "Who is she?" he asked. "Does she have any connections to Densmore or McClintock?"

The man who snapped the photo shook his head. "We don't think so. She's just a college student. Good-looking babe, eh?"

The priest slid the photo into his desk drawer. "Thank you. You can go."

~4~

The next day at the shelter, Banyon anxiously waited for Angela to arrive so he could show her what he'd discovered about Mars and Venus. This business of mirrored numbers and the idea of opposites like the Mars-Male/Venus-Female thing intrigued him. He felt like he was on to something but he had no idea what it might be. He simply found it all very curious.

The morning passed slowly. There was plenty of work to be done but he couldn't keep his mind on any of it. Trying to help out in the kitchen, he found himself stirring a large pot of soup on the stove for five minutes before Jenny, one of the volunteers, pointed out to him that he'd forgotten to turn the burner on.

"Mr. Banyon," she said, trying to be tactful, "I think we've pretty much got things under control right now. You probably have other things to do."

He caught the intent of what she was implying and he had to laugh. "Okay, I can take a hint."

He was just about to exit the kitchen when he heard Jenny calling after him. He thought she may have felt that she offended him and was about to offer an apology. He turned toward her and was about to tell her it was okay but she spoke first.

"The apron," she said.

"What?"

"The apron. You're wearing my apron."

He looked down at the frilly yellow and white polka dot apron still tied around his waist. He grinned. "Ah!" he said, untying it and tossing it over to her. "Sorry about that."

"That's all right," she said, fastening the apron around her own waist. "Mr. Banyon? Are you okay? You seem... I don't know..."

"Yeah! I'm fine. Just got things on my mind, I guess. I'll be in my office. Oh, by the way..."

"Yes?"

“Think there’s any chance of maybe serving something besides bean soup on Mondays?”

“Why?”

“Oh, you know. Old Tom’s still complaining about having bean soup every Monday. I just wondered.”

Jenny laughed. “If it was top sirloin steak and baked potato with a side of fresh green salad and a choice of wine, Old Tom would still complain.”

“Yeah,” Banyon nodded with a grin, “I suppose you’re right.”

“Besides,” Jenny added, “Who’s running this place anyway? You or Old Tom?”

“You, I think!” Banyon said, laughing, as he left the kitchen.

When he entered his office, He found Angela was already waiting for him.

“Angela! I didn’t expect you for another half hour or so.”

“One of my classes was cancelled this afternoon, so I was able to get away a little sooner.”

“Great. Have I got something to show you!”

“I’ve got something to show you, too,” she said, handing him a piece of paper.

“What’s this?”

“Read it.”

He read the typewritten note:

FOR SALE: COMPUTER WITH MONITOR AND PRINTER.
ONLY FOUR YEARS OLD. WORKS PERFECTLY. SACRIFICE,
ONLY \$400.00.

He looked up at her and shrugged. “So?”

“That was on the bulletin board at school,” she explained. “I think you should buy it.”

He laughed. “Me? Whatever for? I hate computers.”

“Actually, I was thinking of me”, she replied. “I mean, since I’m doing most of the bookwork now, it would be a lot easier to do on a computer with one of those bookkeeping programs. This old ledger book stuff is a pain in the you-know-what. And you’d be surprised at what else it would come in handy for. We have the funds and the price is a steal, believe me. And besides that, we could get access to the internet.”

Banyon scoffed. “The internet! You mean all that dot com stuff?

Hah! What in the world do we need that for?"

"Well, for one thing," she said, hoping to persuade him with her best sales pitch and a bit of attitude, "how about access to everything in the world you could ever possibly want to know about numerology and gematria and religion and..."

That caught his attention. "That's on the internet?"

"You betcha," she grinned, thinking she'd hooked him.

"Hmm..." he scratched his chin.

"Come on, Zeke. It's about time you made the leap from the dark ages into the modern world. Don't you think?"

"Well..."

"Great! Give me a blank check and I'll pick up the computer tomorrow."

"But," he said looking around the cramped quarters of the office, "where in the world would we put it?"

"Glad you mentioned that," she said. "That's the next thing I need to talk to you about."

"Oh no. What now?"

"You know that empty room down at the end of the hall?"

"Of course. It's another small storage room."

"But it's pretty much empty now, right?"

"Pretty much, yes."

"Well, if you can make an office out of this little room, I figured I could make an office out of that little room. What do you think? We could put the computer in there and, really, I could use the space instead of both of us trying to share this one small office. I mean, what with trying to organize the fund drives and other stuff. You know? Doesn't that seem like a good idea?"

He had to agree. It was a reasonable request and the storage room was not being used for much of anything anyway.

"You're right," he conceded. "It's actually a good idea. But you'll need a desk and file cabinets, and..."

"Got that all figured out," she said. "I have two desks at home. I only need one and I have some other things that I could bring down here. That is, if it's okay with you."

"Sure. That sounds okay to me."

"Cool!" she said with a big grin on her face. "Maybe we can do it this weekend."

“Well, okay,” Banyon shrugged. “Why not?”

“Just one thing...”

“What’s that?”

Angela grinned. “You wouldn’t happen to have a pickup truck, would you?”

“No, but I know someone who does. I’m sure I could borrow it.”

“So you’ll help me move the stuff then?”

“Do I have a choice?”

“Well...”

“Of course I’ll help you,” he laughed. “I’ll call my friend tomorrow and arrange to borrow the truck.”

“All right!” she said, excitedly. “Thank you!”

“So if you’re through planning my life for me,” he said, “I have something I’ve been dying to show you.”

The two of them huddled around his desk as he explained his discovery about the numbers 6 and 9 and the symbology attributed to them according to the numerology book.

“What do you make of that?” he asked. “Pretty weird, huh?”

“Wait a minute,” she said, grabbing a pencil and a sheet of paper. “Let me get this straight. Nine represents Mars but Mars turns out to have an alphanumeric value of six?”

“Right.”

“And six represents Venus but Venus has a value of nine?”

“Yes.”

“Hmm... well, yes, that is curious, I’ll have to admit,” she said thoughtfully as she doodled with the numbers 6 and 9. “You know what?”

“What?”

“Look at this.”

“Look at what?”

In her doodling she had drawn a 6 and a 9, fairly large, very close to each other, almost touching. The result was a large **69**. She handed him the piece of paper.

“What?” he asked, looking at her scribbles.

She reached in her purse and, after a little digging, she produced a keychain with a black and white ceramic symbol on it. She placed it on the piece of paper next to the large **69**.

“Yin yang,” she said.

Banyon still didn't see the connection. "Yin yang?"

"Look," she said, pointing out the similarity between the alternating black and white swirl design of the symbol on her keychain and the **69** she had doodled on the paper. "This is a Chinese symbol representing the yin and the yang of the universe."

"Gees, you're right! Look at that! I've heard of yin and yang before but I guess I never really paid much attention to what it meant. Something about opposites, right? Balance of nature? That sort of thing?"

Angela laughed. "Well, you must have paid attention somewhere along the line because that's exactly the idea, yes. Also the interrelatedness of things. That's why in the black part of the design there's a small white dot and..."

"And in the white part," he finished the sentence for her, "there's a small black dot. I get it. Very interesting! The whole thing... amazing! How can this be? Is this all just coincidence? I mean, think about it. What are the odds of all these seemingly unrelated things all having this... this..."

"Interconnectedness?" she offered.

"Yes, exactly! That's it."

"I don't know. It's kind of exciting but it's weird!"

"What else do you know about this yin yang thing?" he asked.

"Well, believe it or not, my anthropology professor actually mentioned this symbol the other day when we were discussing differences and similarities between cultures around the world. I remember he said yin symbolizes the female energy and yang is the male energy."

"Interesting. Like the Mars-Venus thing. Male, female."

"Yes. And I remember he wrote the word, *Qi*, on the board. I think he pronounced it like the word *key*."

"What did it mean?"

"It's a Chinese word that means life force, or something like that."

"Life force?"

"Yes. It was kind of hard to understand but basically it's kind of like... um..." she stumbled around for the right word. "Man, I don't know. Kind of an all-encompassing essence that flows through everything."

"Everything?"

“Yes. Everything. You, me, this desk, the wall, everything.”

“Well I guess that’s not unlike some concepts of God,” Banyon admitted.

“What do you mean?”

“Well, you’ve heard it said that God is in everything, right?”

“Oh! Yeah, that’s right. Same idea, I guess.”

“And one could think of God as a *life force*, right?”

“Yes, I guess you could. Wow. Cool!”

“*Qi*, huh?” Banyon muttered, punching buttons on his pocket calculator. He scratched something down on the piece of paper. “Guess what?” he said after a few moments.

“What? *Qi* equals nine?”

“No, but something just as curious.”

“What is it?”

Going on the idea that *Qi* and God are the same thing, at least maybe in some sense, I figured the value of each word just to see what it might be.”

“And...?”

“And they each equal twenty-six!”

“No kidding?”

“Yeah. You know what’s kind of interesting about that? The English alphabet that we’re using to do all of this has twenty-six letters in it.”

“How synchronistic,” she said, grinning.

Banyon stood up and turned to gaze out the window. “You know what?”

“What?”

“I wonder if it’s possible that the English alphabet could be a cipher of some kind.”

“A cipher?”

“Yeah. You know. A tool for unlocking a code.”

“A code? What are you talking about?”

He laughed. “I don’t know, actually! It’s crazy, I know.” He paused for moment, looking down, and then turned to her. “Have you ever heard of the Bible Code?”

“No. What’s the Bible code?”

He sat down again. “Well, apparently there seems to be information encoded within the original Hebrew text of the Torah.”

“The Torah?”

“That’s the Hebrew word for the first five books of the Old Testament.”

“Oh. So what do you mean, encoded? What kind of information?”

“This was just recently discovered. The information - it could be a word or a group of related words or a phrase or even a date - is found hidden within the text by using what they call a skip code.”

“A skip code?”

“Yeah. What the researchers did was to eliminate all the punctuation and all the spaces between the words in the text of the Torah. So they ended up with pages and pages of lines of text in one long string of letters. Legend has it that this is how Moses actually wrote it. Essentially, each page just looked like a big block of letters. You see what I’m saying? And the skip coding works like this.” He went on to explain as well as he could, given his own limited knowledge of the subject. “You start with the first letter of the text in the book of Genesis and skip, say for example, ten letters. Now you have the first letter and the tenth letter. Then you skip another ten letters and record that. And so on, all the way through the entire Torah. Then you look to see what words or phrases may have been spelled out among those particular letters. And there are several different skip sequences that can be applied. Like you could try skipping every third letter all the way through. Or every 18th letter, and so on.”

“But,” she laughed, “that would take for ever!”

“Well, yeah. But they do it with a computer. They’ve developed a program that can process thousands of skip code functions in no time.”

“See?” she grinned smugly. “I told you computers were good for something. So what kind of information have they found by doing this?”

“Amazing stuff. The guy who wrote the book about it actually discovered the name of the Prime Minister of Israel hidden in the text. It was spelled vertically instead of horizontally.”

“Vertically?”

“Yeah, you know, like a word spelled vertically in a crossword puzzle?”

“You’re kidding!”

“No, but wait. What’s really amazing is that the phrase, *Assassin That Will Assassinate*, was also found hidden in the text and it was

spelled out horizontally, crisscrossing the Prime Minister's name. You see? Like a crossword puzzle!"

"What? Come on," Angela said, with a fair degree of skepticism in her voice.

"It's true. And a year later the Prime Minister was assassinated."

"Oh, yes! I remember! But, how can that be? You mean the future is foretold in this code? That's crazy!"

"I know it sounds crazy. But mathematicians around the world have studied this phenomenon and it appears to be real."

"What else have they found?"

"Well, that's even weirder."

"That's okay. I'm sitting down. Lay it on me," she said. "This is better than the X-Files."

Banyon lit up a cigarette and leaned back in his chair. "All right. Believe it or not, it seems that nearly every significant event in history and the names of the key people involved in the unfolding of those events, and even the dates of those events, are encoded within the pages of the Torah."

"Come on! You mean..."

"The Kennedy assassination. The bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma. Both World Wars. The landing of a man on the moon. The Gulf War. Hitler. Watergate. President Clinton. Thomas Edison. Even the name we gave to that comet just recently, Shoemaker-Levy, was found encoded in the text. It just goes on and on."

"This is too much," she said, reaching into her purse for a pack of cigarettes. "I mean, how could such a code exist? And why?"

"Why, I don't know. But as to how it was done, believe it or not, the code actually states that it was done by computer!"

"Computer! But I thought this was written three thousand years ago! Who had a computer three thousand years ago? Are you saying the word *computer* is actually encoded in the text?"

"Yup. Of course it's in Hebrew, but it's exactly the modern Hebrew word for computer. And I don't just mean the word *computer* is in there all by itself. It was a whole phrase that said something like, *It was created by computer.*"

"But *what* was created by computer? How do they know what *it* was? *It* could be anything."

"Ah! But here's the kicker," Banyon explained. "The clue to what a

lot of these words and phrases refer to is found in the word or phrase that crosses it. Just like the name of the Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, was crossed by the phrase, *Assassin will assassinate*. In the case of the words, *It was created by computer*, the phrase that crossed it was something like, *The writing by God on the tablets*.”

“Great,” Angela said, rolling her eyes. “So God’s a computer nerd. Sort of a cosmic Bill Gates. Is that the deal?”

Banyon let out a good laugh. “To tell you the truth,” he said, “I don’t know what to think of the whole thing. But now you see why it occurred to me that the English alphabet just might be something similar to the Bible Code. I mean if there’s one code, why not two? Or more? Or maybe they’re all just parts of one big code. I don’t know. What do you think?”

Angela didn’t know what to think. Her head was spinning just trying to comprehend the implications of such a thing. It seemed preposterous. On the other hand, if there really was some kind of a code in the Bible, as these brilliant and obviously educated men seemed to believe, then maybe Banyon’s alphabet code wasn’t so crazy after all. She finally conceded. “Well,” she said, shrugging her shoulders, “I suppose you could be on to something. I mean if the Bible Code is real then, well, why not?”

Banyon was listening but he was scribbling something down on a note pad and punching his little pocket calculator. “You know what the word, *code*, comes out to?” he asked.

“I don’t know. What?”

“Twenty-seven!”

Angela caught it right away. “Two plus seven is nine,” she grinned.

He nodded his head thoughtfully. “This means something,” he said. “This has got to mean something.”

THE ~5~ EZEKIEL

Angela's knack for organizing the seemingly unorganizable was put to the test the following weekend. Still, by the end of the day, she and Banyon had managed to turn the extra storage room into a surprisingly decent little office, computer and all. The room was quite small but at least it had a window that helped brighten things up.

Banyon sat down in front of the computer and stared at it like it was a piece of alien technology from a galaxy far, far away. Cautiously, he ran a finger across the top of the monitor and then quickly recoiled his hand as if he wasn't sure it was safe. Angela caught him out of the corner of her eye as she straightened the sheer white curtain she'd just hung over the window. She couldn't help but laugh as she recalled the apes cautiously poking at the mysterious black monolith in Stanley Kubrick's movie, *2001: A Space Odyssey*. The comparison was just so appropriate... and funny.

"What?" Banyon asked.

"You!" she said. "It won't bite, you know. It isn't even plugged in."

He grinned. "Yeah, yeah. Well, so now that we have this thing, how do we get on the internet?"

"Oh my! For a techno-Neanderthal you're sure jumping into things!"

"Well, I paid for this contraption! I want to see how it works!"

Angela reached for her purse and pulled out a CD. "This," she said, "is our ticket to the information super highway!"

"What is it?"

"It's everything we need to get onto the internet. We just plug in the computer, slip the disk in, and in minutes we'll be signed up and logged on!"

"Will it hurt?"

"Only once a month," she said from under the desk as she located the plug for the computer.

“What do you mean?”

Angela crawled out from under the desk. “When they ding your checking account for twenty bucks,” she grinned. “You’ll never miss it.”

“Twenty bucks? Every month?”

“Out of my chair,” she commanded, tapping him on the shoulder. “Let’s get this puppy rollin!”

“You get it rollin’,” Banyon said, getting up to leave.

“Where are you going?”

“To look for a second job to pay that twenty bucks a month!” He winked at her as he walked out the door.

About an hour later he returned with a cup of coffee for each of them. “Are we on?” he asked as he set her cup on what looked to him like a cup holder sticking out of the front of the computer.

“Don’t do that!” Angela scolded. “You’ll break it!”

“Break what? The cup holder? What good is it if it won’t hold a cup of coffee?”

“It’s not a cup holder!” she said. “That’s the CD tray!”

“The what?” he said, cocking his head, studying the thing.

She couldn’t help laughing. “It’s the CD tray. You put the disk on it and slide it into the computer so the computer can read what’s on it.”

Banyon sat on the corner of her desk sipping his coffee. “Hmm...”, he mumbled. “So, are we on?”

Angela straightened herself up in front of the monitor. “We will be in a second.” She expertly maneuvered the mouse around on the pad. With a couple of clicks a colorful display came up on the screen.

“Cool!” Banyon said, peering over her shoulder.

“Shall we go surfin?” Angela asked.

“In this weather?”

She laughed. “No, silly. Surfing means...”

“I know what it means,” he chided her. “I’m not completely ignorant, you know.”

“Okay, smart ass,” she laughed. “What do you want to check out?”

“How about numerology?”

“You got it. Let’s call up a search engine and see what we get.”

“Call up a what?”

“I thought you weren’t completely ignorant,” she teased.

“Oh!” he laughed. “Now who’s the smart ass?”

She explained to him what a search engine was and what it could be used for. "So," she said, "we'll type in *numerology* and see what we get."

In just a few seconds another colorful screen came up on the monitor.

"Hoo! Boy!" Angela said. "Look at that!"

"What?"

"Says here there's four-hundred-eighty-thousand-six-hundred-and-fifty-two web sites that are in some way related to numerology!"

Banyon nearly choked on his coffee. "Are you kidding me? How can that be?"

"I guess I'm not surprised," she answered. "There are countless millions of web sites out there. This many hits on a single topic isn't unusual anymore."

The page on the screen listed the first 20 related web sites. Angela scrolled down the screen so they could read each one.

"That's only twenty," Banyon said. "Where's the rest of them? The other ten-thousand-gazillion?"

"You have to click onto the next page. That'll show you the next twenty. Each page will have twenty web sites listed on it."

"Christ! It'd take you a year to go through all those!"

Angela laughed and took a sip of her coffee. "Yup. Where do you want to start?"

"You know what?"

"What?"

"Are you hungry?"

"I guess I am," she said. "Why? What time is it?"

"It's after six. We didn't even have lunch today. How about we go down to Mario's for a pizza. We can do this surfing thing when you come in tomorrow."

"Sounds good to me," she smiled.

"My treat."

"Sounds even better!"

"Great! Let's go before it gets too busy."

Mario's was already packed when they arrived but they managed to get a booth by the window.

"I like this place!" Angela said, looking around at the decor. "It's

kind of warm and cozy. And it smells great!”

“Yup. This is my hangout. Best little pizza joint in the city.”

They were quickly greeted by a waitress. “Hello, Mr. Banyon!” she smiled. “Good to see you again. Your usual?”

“I’m not sure. Let’s see what my friend, Angela, would like.”

“What’s your usual?” Angela asked him.

“Double pepperoni with extra cheese. Can’t beat it. Best in town. Especially with a cold beer.”

“Sounds good to me. I’ll have that.”

“Done, then!” Banyon said. “We’ll have a large double pepperoni with extra cheese and a couple schooners.”

The waitress took the order and disappeared into the kitchen.

Angela looked around. “Which way to the ladies room? I need to freshen up.”

“Right down there and to the left,” he said, pointing the way.

“Thanks. I’ll just be a couple minutes.”

While she was gone he reached for a napkin and took out his pen and his pocket calculator. Earlier in the day he had been thinking about the conversation he’d had with Angela about the so-called Bible Code. He was curious to know what the alphanumeric value of the name, *Jehovah*, might be. Or *Jesus*, for that matter. Or any of the key names in the Bible. *Would any of them add up to nine or a number that reduced to nine?* he wondered. This was the first time he’d had a chance to find out.

After a few minutes, Angela returned to the table.

“Angela,” he said, looking up from his napkin full of words and numbers. “Look at this.” He slid the napkin over to her.

“Oh, oh,” she said lighting up a cigarette. “More numbers?”

“Yes, more numbers. No nines but check this out.” He pointed to the words on the napkin. “The alphanumeric value of Jehovah is 69.”

“So?”

“Remember our little discussion about Mars and Venus and the number 69 and that Yin Yang symbol?”

“Yes? And?”

“Remember we talked about the number 69 possibly representing the same concept as the Yin Yang? The idea of duality? Opposites? Two sides of the same coin?”

“I remember. What are you getting at?”

“Look at the other two names there. *Jesus* and *Lucifer*.”

Angela studied the writing on the napkin:

JESUS = 74 = LUCIFER

Her eyes lit up. “My God! They both have the same number value! That’s pretty weird. But what’s that got to do with the 69?”

“Think about it. Could this be telling us that Jesus and Lucifer are the two sides of the one coin? Jehovah?”

Angela stared at him with a blank look in her eyes. After a moment, she shook her head. “Say that again?”

“I said, could...”

“Never mind,” she interrupted, “I heard what you said. I did, really. I just...”

“Pretty cool, huh?”

She raised a skeptical eyebrow. “Pretty weird, is more like it. I mean, come on. How could that be?”

“I don’t know. I agree it’s very strange. I mean the whole idea is strange. But it makes sense, doesn’t it?”

“Well, it does, sure. I mean I see what you’re getting at. But how do you know you’re not just reading something into this? Something that isn’t really there? I mean you have to consider that possibility, you know.”

“I know. I know. It’s just so damned compelling. Of course I don’t know much about that Hebrew numerology... what do you call it?”

“Gematria.”

“Yeah, gematria. But I know it’s been practiced by Jewish mystics since ancient times. There must be something about it for it to have survived all these centuries. I mean, who says the Hebrew alphabet has to be the only alphabet that’s...” he paused, looking for the right word.

“Encrypted?”

“Yes! Exactly! Remember I suggested that maybe the English alphabet was some sort of a cipher for unlocking encoded information? I admit I didn’t really know what I was talking about. I still don’t, I guess, but I’m really beginning to wonder now.”

For several moments neither of them said anything as they tried to sort this out in their minds. Angela was just about to say something when the waitress arrived with the pizza.

“Will there be anything else?” the waitress asked.

Banyon shook his head. “No. This looks great. Thank you.”

Angela folded the napkin in half and handed it back to Banyon with a big smile on her face.

“What?” he asked. “You think I’m crazy, don’t you?”

“I don’t know what to think. But I’ll give you this much. The coincidences are pretty amazing.”

He laughed as he tugged awkwardly at a slice of pizza that was hung up with a never-ending string of melted cheese. “That’s for sure. I mean even the word, *cross*, for crying out loud.”

“Cross?”

“Yes. Didn’t you see that at the bottom of the napkin?”

“No. Why? What?”

He unfolded the napkin and handed it back to her. “Jesus is 74 and Lucifer is 74 and, look there.” He pointed with the pen.

CROSS = 74

Angela shook her head. “Oh, man,” she said. “That is weird.”

“Hey wait a minute,” Banyon said. He wrote another word on the napkin and punched the numbers into his calculator. “Wow! Check this out.” He showed it to Angela.

MESSIAH = 74

Angela stared in astonishment.

“Is that cool, or what?” Banyon beamed. “I think I’m on a roll here. Let’s try this. The word messiah meant *king* to the Jewish people. Living under the oppression of the Roman Empire they were hoping for a messiah to arise and establish, or reestablish a kingship. Someone who would be the king of the Jews, right?” Not waiting for Angela’s reply he jotted something else on the napkin and punched in the numbers. Somewhat stunned by the result, he slid the napkin over to her and pointed to what he’d just written:

THE KING = 74

She couldn’t believe her eyes. “That’s amazing!”

Banyon was having one of his moments where it seemed almost as if the information was coming to him from an outside source. He had

no other way to explain it. "Give me the napkin," he said, urgently.

Something else came into his mind and he wanted to jot it down before he lost it. He wrote quickly and punched in the numbers.

"Unbelievable," was all he could say. He showed it to Angela. It was an alphanumeric equation.

JESUS CHRIST THE KING = 225
= JESUS AND LUCIFER ARE ONE

"Oh," she muttered, almost recoiling from the words she was reading. "I don't know if I'm liking this. This is getting too weird. We're gonna get struck by lightening or something."

"Don't be silly," he scolded. "You're sounding like my mother. It's just words and numbers on paper. But look how the idea there correlates with the fact that Jesus and Lucifer both share the same alphanumeric value. And check out that number. It reduces to nine".

She looked at him. "Did you just now come up with those phrases?"

He nodded. "Yeah."

"How? How did you do that?"

"I don't know," he shrugged. "They just sort of came to me."

Angela looked perplexed, realizing that something odd was going on. She took a swallow of beer and sat back to consider the whole thing. "Well, all I can say is that this is going beyond simple coincidence. It's more like synchronicity."

"Synchronicity?"

"Meaningful coincidence" she explained. "As opposed to just one of those odd things that happens by mere chance."

"Hmm. You mean... what? Like, planned? Predestined? Something like that?"

Angela shrugged her shoulders. "I'm not really sure. I don't know. Has to do with archetypes and all that Jungian stuff."

"Archetypes? Jungian?"

"Yeah, you know. Carl Jung? The Swiss psychologist? He coined the word, *synchronicity*."

"Carl Jung. Yeah, I remember now. A friend of Sigmund Freud, wasn't he?"

"Sigmund Freud. Yes, I think so."

“Yeah. I remember reading about him way back in college. Archetypes and all that. Man I haven’t thought about that stuff in years.”

“I don’t think I ever really quite got that archetype idea,” Angela confessed.

Banyon nodded. “Yeah, the archetype thing is pretty heady stuff. I remember some discussion about it when I was at seminary.”

“Archetypes have something to do with religion?”

“Well, sort of,” he said. “It’s hard to explain. I should really read up on it again. Basically, as I recall, the whole notion of archetypes has to do with a kind of preexisting form of things that supposedly resides in the so called collective unconscious.” He shook his head and looked somewhat surprised. “Man, I can’t believe I remembered that. It was so long ago.”

“Oh, right,” Angela said. “The collective unconscious. More Jung stuff.”

“Yeah. Like for example, angels, let’s say. There’s a school of thought that angels don’t really exist in the conventional way of thinking. You know, like real entities living in Heaven with God. The archetype hypothesis would be that the concept of *angel* - just the concept, mind you - is somehow part of the human psyche and that the concept resides in the collective unconscious. The reality of angels, then, is of our own making. They become real through our belief in them. We paint pictures of them. We write stories and poems and songs about them and, after a while, we believe they’re real. Or something like that.”

“But,” Angela came back, “paintings all over the world depict angels pretty much the same way. If there are no such things as angels, if nobody ever really saw one, then where did that image come from? I mean, if there wasn’t some real thing that inspired the image in the first place, you’d think there would be dozens, maybe hundreds of different concepts of what angels look like and we’d see all these different images depicted in the paintings around the world.”

“Well, that’s just it,” Banyon said. “The image, according to this archetype idea, exists naturally in the collective unconscious. And that’s what people perceive in their minds.”

“Pretty strange,” Angela said, reaching for another slice of pizza. “Interesting, but strange.”

Their conversation drifted back and forth between archetypes, Jung, angels, numerology and other related subjects. In the short amount of time since they'd first met, they'd become amazingly comfortable with each other and could talk for hours about almost anything.

"Oh man," Banyon said, glancing at his watch. "It's almost ten o'clock. I can't believe we've been sitting here for nearly three hours."

"You're kidding! Well, time flies when you're talking about archetypes."

Banyon laughed. "Apparently so. Do you want another beer?"

At the phone booth, near the cash register, a man in a black overcoat was making a call. He spoke in hushed tones. "This Banyon fellow," the man said, speaking with an Italian accent, "he might be on to something. Yes, I was sitting right behind them. I heard everything. No, I don't think so. Yes, of course I'll keep you informed."

Angela considered the offer of one more beer but decided against it. "No, I have a class in the morning so I really better get going. But thanks. It was really good. The pizza and all."

"My pleasure, Angel," he said, helping her on with her coat.

Looking back at him over her shoulder, she gave him a crooked grin. "Ha, ha," she said. "I get it. So do I exist only in your collective unconscious?"

"Well," he said as they headed for the door, "if you do, it's one beautiful archetype!" He cringed at his own words. *Gees, Zeke, how corny can you get?*

Angela didn't reply but even as she lay in the comfort of her own bed that night, those sweet words were the last to run through her mind as she drifted off to sleep.

THE EZEKIEL CODE

~6~

Over the next several days, Angela showed Banyon how to navigate the internet and use it as a research tool. Their list of keywords to plug into the search engines began to grow as they delved deeper into the strange world of numerology and mysticism.

"I've got another one for you," Angela said, arriving early for work after a fairly short day at school. She hung her coat on the rack in the corner of Banyon's office and handed him a book called *The Mayan Mystery*.

"Another what?" he asked, turning the book over to read the back cover.

"Another keyword," she said.

"What is it?"

"Mayan."

"Mayan?"

He thumbed through the pages of the book and raised an eyebrow, silently begging for an explanation.

"We're studying the ancient Mayan civilization of Central America."

"And...?"

"And it seems they were also into the number nine."

Banyon sat up with renewed interest. "Oh? Do tell."

"Yup. Seems they were very number conscious in a lot of ways. Kind of like somebody I know." She gave him a wink. "They even devised a calendar system with such accuracy it stuns the imagination. Or at least it stuns the imagination of those who understand it. But anyway, in the book, there, it mentions something about what they called the *Nine Lords of Time*."

Banyon chuckled. "The *Nine Lords of Time*? Well, now that does sound interesting. So who were the *Nine Lords of Time*, pray tell?"

"Well," she said, "If I understood it right, they were part of the ancient Mayan mythology. See, some say the Mayans were part of a

large group of Amer-Indians who migrated across the Bering Strait from Asia, maybe twelve thousand years ago, and settled in Central America. But others are not so sure it's that simple."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, are you ready for this?"

He laughed. "I don't know. Am I?"

"Well, apparently, according to some researchers, the ancient Mayan writings indicate they came to the earth from another star system."

"Oh, *really!*" Banyon smiled with amusement.

"And that's where the *Nine Lords of Time* fit into the picture. They're also referred to as the *Galactic Masters*."

"Ah! The great Galactic Masters! Of course! Please go on," said Banyon, lighting a cigarette and leaning back in his chair. "Don't stop now. This is getting good."

"Well, I've really got to get to work. There's stuff piling up on my desk. But that's why I brought you the book so you can read it for yourself."

"Okay. I'll check it out. Thanks."

Angela left the room and headed for her office leaving Banyon to explore the ancient world of the Mayans. He discovered what she said about the Mayan preoccupation with numbers was true. In fact it appeared that numbers were somehow at the root of the entire Mayan cosmology. They saw numbers as being more than just representations of quantity. For the Mayans, numbers were also living entities. He read that the key numbers, the numbers that seemed to drive everything, were 1, 13, 7, 9 and 4. He was intrigued by the fact that the number 9 was, according to the information in the book, one of the most important numbers in the whole Mayan system.

The Mayans, Banyon learned, employed a binary numbering system that used 20 as its base. This system, rather than progressing by tens as we are used to, progressed by a factor of 20. In the first position a unit equals 1. In the second position a unit then equals 20. In the third it progresses to 20 times 20, or 400. In the fourth it equals 400 times 20, or 8000, and continues on in that manner.

Banyon learned that the Mayans were not necessarily as concerned with the sequential aspects of numbers so much as they were with the *relationships* between numbers. To the Mayans,

numbers meant far more than just a means of quantification. They believed numbers were symbols representing the harmonic values and overtones of what the book called *dynamic energies of the galaxy*. It was clear that the Mayans considered numbers to be representative of the way life and the universe work.

Suddenly he noticed the time. He'd been reading for two hours and had neglected to get his work finished for the day. Putting the book aside, he busied himself with some of the paper work that needed to get done but he couldn't get the Mayan information out of his mind. The day dragged on until finally it was time to go home.

That evening he perched himself up in bed with the book and his favorite spiced tea and continued to read well into the night. He learned that the numbers 13 and 20 were also key to the Mayan system. These two numbers, multiplied together, equaled 260 and formed the great matrix known as the Tzolkin, the basis for the Mayan calendar. It was upon this 13 x 20 matrix, or grid, that the entire Mayan philosophy was based. The other key numbers were 7, 4, and 9. Banyon was intrigued to learn that the number 9, to the Mayans, symbolized the concepts of periodicity and completeness and also represented the *Nine Lords Of Time*. Just as Angela had said, they were the original Mayan *Galactic Masters*. According to the book, some researchers were suggesting the Galactic Masters may have come to earth to present earth-humans with a key to understanding the universe and our place within it. It also cautioned that this interpretation was, of course, geared more to New Age philosophy than it was to mainstream academic thinking. But Banyon was beginning to like this New Age stuff. *Poor mom*, he thought to himself, *she's probably rolling over in her Catholic grave*.

Suddenly, given what he'd been experiencing lately, he was realizing there just might be more to *the way things are* than conventional wisdom would allow. He lit a cigarette, took a sip of tea and went on to the next chapter.

In addition to the number 9, the number 260 was of utmost importance to the Mayan system. This was the number of days in a time cycle which correlated in some way to the cycles of sun spot activity and which was at the foundation of their whole system of prophecy. It was a mystery how the ancient Mayans could possibly

have known about the phenomenon of sun spot cycles.

The number 260 interested Banyon because, as he thought about it, it seemed out of place in a way. It's digits added up to 8. The book's long and detailed discussions about the complexity of the Mayan calendar revealed pages and pages of numbers. Some of them were very long numbers like the so-called *Great Cycle* number of 1,872,000. This, like so many of the other multi-digit numbers in the Mayan mathematics, could be reduced to the single-digit value of 9. In his own recent musings about the number 9 and the English alphabet, he was somewhat bothered by the fact that the alphabet consisted of only 26 letters. It just seemed like it would all be quite complete, in a neat and tidy package, if the alphabet had just one more letter to make it 27. The single-digit value would then be 9. But wishful thinking wasn't going to change anything. There was either something wrong with the picture or there was something he was just not seeing.

He pondered over the question as he got out of bed and wandered into the kitchen to brew another cup of tea. Suddenly it hit him. He grabbed his tea and his calculator and jumped back into bed with the book.

He noticed that if the first letter *A*, with a value of 1, was combined with the last letter *Z*, with a value of 26, the sum was 27 which reduced to 9. Likewise, *B*, with a value of 2, added to *Y*, with a value of 25, equaled 27 which reduced to 9. It was the same for every combination of letters working forward from the front of the alphabet and backwards from the end of the alphabet all the way to the center where *M*, with a value of 13, met *N*, with a value of 14. Like all the rest of the combinations, the sum of *MN* was 27 which, like the others of course, could be reduced to 9. Moreover, the fact that he'd already discovered the alphanumeric value of the word, *CODE*, was 27 didn't escape his attention and only added to the excitement of the moment. In his mind this validated his idea that the alphabet might be a decoding mechanism of some kind.

He was astounded. He had discovered the value of 9, by way of 27, encoded within the very structure of the 26-letter alphabet! Then he flashed on a correlation with something he'd been reading concerning the Mayan calendar. That calendar was, in essence, a system of cycles of time. Now he realized his idea of combining the first letter of the alphabet with the last letter could be seen as a circle, with *A* connected to *Z*.

“A circle!” he said to himself. “A circle of twenty six letters!”

Then he remembered something from Angela’s old book on numerology. Something about what they called *harmonics*. Something about dropping the zeros. If the other numerals matched, then they were considered significantly harmonized, significantly linked in some metaphysical way. Zero was not so much a number as it was just a place holder. It was the other numbers that were important. Suddenly he realized this circle of 26 letters harmonized with the idea of the Mayan 260 day cycle. The number 26 was a harmonic of 260.

“Circle... cycle...!” he grinned to himself. “Twenty-six! Two-sixty!”

His mind was racing. It seemed as if information was being downloaded into his brain not unlike when Angela showed him how to download information from the internet onto the computer’s hard drive. The idea of a circle of 26 letters kept tugging at him. Something was happening. Words and phrases seemed to be forcing their way into his brain. He’d experienced this before. It was similar to when he and Angela were sitting at Mario’s writing on the napkin. But this was much more intense. It felt strange yet exhilarating. He grabbed his calculator and pen and a note pad and began writing alphanumeric equations almost as if it was beyond his control:

ENGLISH ALPHABET CIRCLE = 189
= THE ENLIGHTENED ONE
= SQUARE OF TWELVE

THE SACRED ALPHABET CIRCLE = 198
 $198 - 189 = 9$

THE AREA OF A CIRCLE = 120
= THE MIND OF GOD

TWENTY SIX DEGREES = 222
= THE ENGLISH ALPHABET CIRCLE

His mind reeled. His attention kept going back to the first phrases that equaled 189. He focused on the phrase, *SQUARE OF TWELVE*. He punched in the number 12 and hit the button to find the mathematical square of that number.

“One-forty-four!” he said aloud. “I know that number.” He had learned early on that 144 was the alphanumeric value of his own name. But it made him think of something else: the book of Revelation and the 144,000 souls redeemed. *But what does that have to do with this?* he wondered. *Maybe nothing. Am I losing my mind? Besides, 144 isn't 144,000.*

But then he remembered the harmonics and the 26 and the 260. In this case it was 144 and 144,000. The zeroes didn't matter! He felt strongly that this number, 144, was important. *Really* important. But he didn't know why. Or was he just attaching importance to it because it happened to be the value of his own name? He wanted to call Angela and tell her about all of this. But it was after midnight so he decided to wait. He was excited but he was also exhausted and what he really needed was to get some rest. Tomorrow would come soon enough. *This means something*, he kept thinking to himself as he drifted off to sleep. *This means something.*

~7~

Banyon was totally fascinated with the Mayan culture. He spent many hours over the next several days studying the book and surfing the internet for anything he could find about that mysterious race of people. He had only been vaguely aware of the fact that the Mayans, like the Egyptians, had built huge pyramids and other stone monuments. Now he wondered why? What connections could there possibly have been between the Mayans and the Egyptians? Geographically, they were on opposite sides of the planet. Archaeologists seemed to have no real explanation. It was just one more mystery to be solved.

Angela agreed the discovery of the number 9 hidden within the alphabet was a neat trick, to be sure, but she was a little more skeptical

about whether or not it actually had some kind of a tie to the idea of cycles of time, or cycles of anything for that matter, in the Mayan calendar system. That seemed a bit of a stretch. After all, how could there possibly be a connection? *The English alphabet and the Mayan calendar*? The two things seemed worlds apart both conceptually and culturally. It couldn't possibly be true.

Banyon, on the other hand, was excited about the possibility. To him it didn't seem any less likely than the mystery of the connection between the Mayans building pyramids and the Egyptians building pyramids even though, supposedly, the two cultures had no means of communicating with each other. Clearly, he was beginning to understand, some things in this world are interconnected despite a lack of explanation as to the *how* or the *why* of it all.

The more he studied, the more convinced he was that something was going on here. As far as he was concerned, the common thread bridging those cultural and conceptual gaps was that mysterious and pervasive number 9.

The Mayans, Banyon learned, had a problem similar to his own when it came to that number 260 which was the Mayan counterpart to his number 26, the number of letters in the alphabet. Their number 260 – like his number 26 – added up to 8, not 9. Banyon had solved his own dilemma by discovering how to essentially fold the alphabet in half, right between the M and the N. This resulted in dividing the 26-letter strand exactly in half. This, in turn, created a strand of thirteen 2-letter combinations. Each of the 2-letter combinations equaled 27 which reduced to 9. The Mayans seemed equally uncomfortable with their number 260. The number was essential to the structure of the whole system yet it seems this system - based on the 260-unit matrix - was not particularly suited to the planet Earth, at least in terms of computing basic cycles of time. The missing ingredient was 9. So they modified the system to more closely correspond to the annual revolution of our planet around the sun. This modification brought the number 9 into the picture in a big way as it involved changing the third position number from 400 to 360, a multiple of 9. From this third position onward the base-20 progression now yielded units that were all multiples of 9. The progression was now 1 to 20 to 360 to 7200 to 144,000 and so on.

Banyon had already toyed with the idea that maybe the English

alphabet and the 9-series numbering system was either a code or a cipher of some kind. *If so*, he wondered, *what secrets might it reveal? Could this be a key to unlocking some hidden messages encoded within some ancient text? Would it help reveal information encoded within certain words?* He shivered with anticipation at the very thought. He was beginning to feel like Indiana Jones on a quest to find the lost Ark of the Covenant. For a moment he fantasized himself and Angela packing their bags and heading off into the jungles of Central America, skulking around ancient stone ruins and climbing the magnificent old Mayan pyramids in search of... what? *The secret of 9? What the hell is it about this number?* he wondered. *What secret does it hold? Is it, indeed, a key?* It suddenly dawned on him that the word *key* had been coming into his thoughts a lot lately. He'd even seen it many times in his reading. Something about the word itself was now resonating in his head. Synchronicity seemed to be working overtime.

He was reminded of his conversation with Angela about archetypes and symbols. The idea of a key was definitely an archetypal concept.

Something was happening inside him. He'd never been one to experience intuitions but he somehow recognized that he was experiencing one now. The word, *key*, was practically vibrating inside his body. He shivered and tried to control the urge to laugh out loud. *Am I going crazy?* He sat back and lit up a cigarette. He was just about to put the book aside for a while when an illustration on the back cover caught his attention. He'd seen it before, of course, and there was another picture of it inside the book. But now it seemed to be attracting him like a magnet. It was a graphic depiction of the 260-unit Tzolkin, the matrix of the Mayan calendar. Basically it was nothing more than a rectangular grid of 13 vertical columns each 20 units deep, creating a total of 260 units. Each little cell, or unit, of the grid contained a number. It began with the number 1 at the top left corner of the grid and continued downward through 13. After 13 it continued on down, beginning with 1 again. Since there were only 20 units in each of the 13 vertical columns, the numbers in the first column ended with the number 7 but continued with 8 at the top of the next column. From the 8 at the top of the column the numbering continued downward again until the number 13 was reached and, once again, it

continued downward beginning with 1. So it was a continuing series of 1 through 13, snaking its way all the way to the last unit at the bottom right corner of the grid where it ended with the final number 13.

1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7
2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8
3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9
4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10
5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11
6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12
7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13
8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1
9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2
10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3
11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4
12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5
13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6
1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7
2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8
3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9
4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10
5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11
6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12
7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13

On a whim, guided by this strange intuition vibrating inside him, he decided to take this 13 x 20 matrix and replace the numbers with the letters of the alphabet. The Mayans numbered the cells vertically, from top to bottom, starting in the upper left corner and ending at the lower right corner. So it seemed logical to arrange the letters of the alphabet in the same way. He grabbed a pencil and a piece of paper and a ruler and constructed a duplicate of the 13 x 20 grid. Then he inserted the letters of the alphabet, consecutively, *A* through *Z*, *A* through *Z*, *A* through *Z*, continuing all the way to the bottom cell in the lower right corner of the grid. Because there were 260 cells in the grid and 26 letters in the alphabet, the grid accommodated the series of letters perfectly, beginning with *A* in the upper left and ending with *Z* in the lower right.

Then it occurred to him to number the horizontal and vertical sides

of the grid along the outside of the perimeter. Along the top he wrote the numbers 1 through 9. But since there were 13 cells across, that left four cells without numbers. He wondered if maybe he should just continue to number them from 9 through 13 but decided instead to simply begin with the number 1 again. Just as the Mayans had stuck to their series of 1 through 13 he would stick to his series of 1 through 9. *After all*, he thought to himself, *the number nine seems to be a key to this whole thing*. So the top of the grid was numbered from left to right as 1 through 9 and continued to the end with 1 through 4. He then numbered the units down the left side of the grid in the same manner. The vertical numbering then was 1 through 9 and continued downward with 1 through 9 again, and then 1 through 2, to complete the vertical count of 20 units. He had no idea what he was doing but he felt compelled to do it anyway. He lit another cigarette and studied what he'd created.

At first it just looked like a mass of letters. But it reminded him of two things simultaneously. On the lighter side, it reminded him of those *find-a-word* puzzles that he'd seen in magazines. But on the more serious side it also reminded him of the blocks of letters of the Hebrew Torah where those Bible Code researchers were finding significant words and phrases. Could that possibly be what he had here? Spurred by that possibility, he crushed out his cigarette and leaned forward to examine this puzzle more closely. Suddenly he saw it.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1	2	3	4
1	A	U	O	I	C	W	Q	K	E	Y	S	M	G
2	B	V	P	J	D	X	R	L	F	Z	T	N	H
3	C	W	Q	K	E	Y	S	M	G	A	U	O	I
4	D	X	R	L	F	Z	T	N	H	B	V	P	J
5	E	Y	S	M	G	A	U	O	I	C	W	Q	K
6	F	Z	T	N	H	B	V	P	J	D	X	R	L
7	G	A	U	O	I	C	W	Q	K	E	Y	S	M
8	H	B	V	P	J	D	X	R	L	F	Z	T	N
9	I	C	W	Q	K	E	Y	S	M	G	A	U	O
1	J	D	X	R	L	F	Z	T	N	H	B	V	P
2	K	E	Y	S	M	G	A	U	O	I	C	W	Q
3	L	F	Z	T	N	H	B	V	P	J	D	X	R
4	M	G	A	U	O	I	C	W	Q	K	E	Y	S
5	N	H	B	V	P	J	D	X	R	L	F	Z	T
6	O	I	C	W	Q	K	E	Y	S	M	G	A	U
7	P	J	D	X	R	L	F	Z	T	N	H	B	V
8	Q	K	E	Y	S	M	G	A	U	O	I	C	W
9	R	L	F	Z	T	N	H	B	V	P	J	D	X
1	S	M	G	A	U	O	I	C	W	Q	K	E	Y
2	T	N	H	B	V	P	J	D	X	R	L	F	Z

The word *KEY* was spelled out on the top line! Then something else caught his attention. This word, *KEY*, was right under the numbers 8, 9, 1. He recognized immediately that 891 was the exact reverse of 198, the address number of the Seattle Gospel Mission. He was stunned. *Is this just coincidence?* he wondered. *What are the odds?* This definitely called for yet another smoke. He fumbled with his cigarette pack only to find it was empty. He couldn't contain himself. He jumped out of his chair and hollered down the hall for Angela to come quickly.

Angela came running to his office, thinking something must be wrong.

"What is it?" she said. "Are you all right?"

"I need a cigarette."

"What?"

"I need a cigarette! Have you got one?"

She looked confused. She could tell there was something going on besides a nicotine fit. "You want to tell me what's happening?" she asked.

He settled down in his chair. "I will, yes. But I'd really like a cigarette."

"All right, already! They're in my office. Hang on, I'll be right back."

She returned in a moment with the smokes and lit one for him. "Here," she said. "Keep the pack. Now, you wanted to tell me something?"

She scooted the extra chair up next to his desk and listened as he explained everything to her. She sat quietly taking it all in. Then she just stared for a few moments at the grid he'd drawn on the sheet of paper. "Amazing," she said finally. She looked up at him. "This is... just amazing! Are there any other words in this matrix?"

"I don't know. When I found the word, *KEY*, I just sort of froze. You know what I mean?"

"Yeah, I bet!" she laughed. "But let's see what else might be in this magic matrix of yours."

Together they scanned the grid full of letters looking for more words.

"Um..." Angela said, "here's the word, *NO*."

"Yeah. Or maybe it's *ON*."

"Oh, right, that could be. Hmm... I don't see anything else. Do you?"

"No, I don't either. Maybe... Hey, wait... Look!" He found the word, *KEY*, again in another part of the grid.

"Yes! Of course!" Angela said. "You have the alphabet in a repeating pattern here in the grid. So there should be several incidences of the word, *KEY*, showing up!"

"You're right," Banyon agreed. "Yup, right there!" he pointed. "And there!"

"And here!" Angela said.

In a few moments they had found every instance of the word, *KEY*, in the grid.

"You're not going to believe this," Banyon said.

"What now?"

He circled each instance of the word, *KEY*, with a red pencil. "You know how many times the word *KEY* appears here?"

Angela counted them. "Oh, man," she said. "Nine keys! Unbelievable."

They both stared at each other for a moment in silence and then laughed.

“What the hell does this mean?” she asked, scooting her chair back from the desk.

Banyon shook his head. “I wish I knew.” He walked over to the coffee maker and poured a cup for each of them. “I really wish I knew.”

In the white unmarked van parked across the street, a man in a black overcoat had just recorded the entire conversation between Banyon and Angela. On a laptop computer he typed an email. The message was short and to the point:

HAVE TAPE. WILL SEND.

~8~

Two black sedans, coming from opposite directions, pulled up along side each other in the covered area beneath a bridge. The windows on the driver’s side of each car rolled down simultaneously and the two drivers spoke to each other.

The first man had a slight Italian accent. “Did you get a chance to hear the tape?” he asked, tugging at the collar of his overcoat.

“Yeah,” the older man in the other car responded. “This could be the guy. I don’t know.”

“*Could* be? What do you mean, *could* be?” the first man complained. “The prophecy says it will be a failed priest without a church and he’ll be called by the name of the visionary. Right? Look, this Banyon fellow started seminary and dropped out. He no longer goes to church. And the man’s first name is Ezekiel for Christ’s sake. What more do you want?”

“Just keep me informed,” the older man said.

Banyon took a sip of coffee. "Angela, I've been thinking."

"Oh-oh," she replied, looking up from her work.

He smiled. "No, I mean seriously."

"Okay, what is it?"

"I've been thinking about how this all began."

"How all what began?"

"This number stuff."

"And...?"

"If it hadn't been for that former director of the shelter scribbling that stuff on the desk pad I never would have known about any of this."

"Probably true. So?"

"It just occurred to me that I don't know anything about him. I want to find out who he was."

"Why?"

"Well, for one thing, why was he doing that? The alphanumeric stuff, I mean. Was he just playing around? Was it just an amusement to pass the time? Or did he know something? Or was he *looking* for something?"

Angela looked interested. "How are we going to find out who he was?"

"I think I'll call my old friend, Father Caldwell. He's back in New York now."

"Father Caldwell?"

"Yes. He's the fellow I told you about. The motivational-kick-in-the-ass guy. Remember? The one who talked me into taking this job here as the director."

"Oh, sure! I remember. Good idea. Call him. He'll probably know something."

"Do you have his number in your file?"

Angela thumbed through the card file. She found Caldwell's number and wrote it down on a piece of paper and handed it to him.

"Thanks. I'll be in my office."

He walked back to his office and sat down at the desk. He stared at the phone number on the paper for several minutes, wondering if this was a stupid thing to be doing. *What if Father Caldwell wants to know why I'm suddenly interested in the former director? What am I going to tell him? I guess I'll just play it by ear.*

He dialed the number. "Hello," he said to the woman who answered the phone. "Father Caldwell, please. Yes, tell him Zeke Banyon is calling from Seattle." He lit up a cigarette and waited. Finally a familiar voice came on the line.

"Banyon! You ol' devil! How are you?"

"Hey Father. I'm doing just fine, thanks. Long time no talk. How are things in New York?"

"Oh, you know. Just about the same. But I just returned from a trip to France. That was very interesting."

"Business or pleasure?"

"Vacation, really. Always wanted to visit the area of Rennes le Chateau."

"Ren-la-what?"

"Rennes le Chateau! You mean you never heard of it?"

"Heard of it?" Banyon laughed. "I can't even say it!"

"The place is the stuff of legend you know! Very intriguing!"

"No kidding? Like what?"

"Oh, too long to go into now. But look it up some time. You'll find it fascinating, I'm sure. But enough about me. To what do I owe the pleasure of this call from out of the blue?"

"Well, I was wondering if you knew how I could find out who was the director of the shelter here before I took the job."

"Oh yes, Densmore, I think. Yes, that was it. Reverend Densmore. Patrick, I think was his first name. Patrick Densmore. Why?"

"I was just thinking about getting in touch with him. Had some questions I thought he could answer for me."

"Well, I'm afraid that might be a bit difficult. Densmore just flat disappeared about a week before you took the job. They never did find him. I thought you knew that. That's why they needed someone to take over the position of director."

"Disappeared? I had no idea. When I was interviewed for the job they just told me the man had taken ill and couldn't handle the task anymore."

"Yes, I guess that was the line they were using at the time," Caldwell said. "The FBI was investigating his disappearance and for some reason they didn't want to bring any more attention to the case than necessary. That thing about him being sick was just a cover. But I don't think the case was ever solved. Something unusual happened, no

doubt, but I never really heard much more about it.”

“Well, that’s quite...” he paused, looking for the right word. “...interesting.”

“But if it helps any, I think his wife is still living up in Marysville just a few miles north of you. Unless she moved.”

“Okay, thanks! I’ll try to look her up.”

They ended the conversation with promises to keep in touch more often and then Banyon sat back and wondered at this new information. He walked down the hall to Angela’s office. She looked up from her work when he entered the room.

“Well?” she said, downing the last drop of coffee in her cup. “What’d you find out?”

“It’s kind of weird.”

Angela chuckled. “Oh, why am I not surprised? What is it now?”

“The guy’s name was Patrick Densmore.”

“What’s so weird about that? Did you find out how to get in touch with him?”

“Well, that’s the problem.” He took Angela’s cup and got one off the shelf for himself. Pouring some coffee for each of them, he told her what he’d learned from Caldwell.

“You mean just disappeared?” she asked. “You mean like... just vanished? No trace?”

“Apparently, yes. Caldwell thinks the case is probably still open but at a dead end.”

“So are you going to go visit his wife?”

“I was thinking about it, if...”

“If what?”

“If you’ll go with me.”

“Hey, I’m always up for a good mystery!”

“Okay then,” he grinned. “The first thing we need to do is find out if she’s still up in Marysville.” He paused a moment. “But how are we going to do that? I don’t have a phone directory for that area.”

Angela chuckled. “Never fear, the internet’s here!” She turned to the computer and logged on.

“The internet? But what if she’s not online? Not everybody in the world is online, you know, despite what you seem to think!”

“Doesn’t matter. There’s a People Search web site. I don’t know how they do it, but they’ve got a gigantic database of names and addresses and

phone numbers. Ah! Here's the site," she said after typing a few keystrokes. "Okay, now all we have to do is type *Marysville* here and... what's her first name?"

Banyon shook his head. "Caldwell didn't seem to know."

"Oh well. We'll skip that and go over here," she said, moving the cursor from box to box on the screen. "And we'll just type in the last name, Densmore. Now just wait a second while it searches the database."

In a matter of a few seconds they had what they wanted.

"Ah, ha!" Angela beamed. "There we go! Patrick and Mary Anne Densmore. 171 Old Barklay Road, Marysville, Washington. And there's the phone number."

"Amazing," Banyon said. "Probably a farm. Lot's of farm land up around there."

"You gonna call her?"

"Oh man. I don't know. What would I say?"

They both sat quiet for a moment, staring at the information on the computer screen.

"Why don't we just take a drive up there tomorrow?" Banyon suggested. "You know, just to sort of drive by and see the place."

"You mean just drop in on her?"

"No, I mean just drive by. You know? Just... I don't know. I just want to see the place. Who knows, maybe that's outdated information and she doesn't even live there anymore."

"Okay," Angela said. "I'm game."

"Oh, by the way," he said, handing her a piece of paper. "Check this out."

She took the piece of paper and looked at what he'd written:

PATRICK DENSMORE = 171

"That's..." Angela started and then paused."...his address!"

"Uh huh. And the number of his name."

"And it equals nine."

"Yup."

"You were right," she said.

"About what?"

"This is weird."

Banyon nodded. "Yup. And I wouldn't be surprised if it gets weirder."

Angela laughed. "Is that even possible?"

He shrugged. "Hey, the way things are going? What do *you* think?"

~9~

Densmore's home was easy enough to find. The Old Barklay Road was nearly a straight line running for several miles through the farm country, pretty much as Banyon had imagined.

They passed three farms along the way, checking the addresses on the mailboxes along the side of the road. The fourth mailbox was a rusty red color with **THE DENSMORE'S** stenciled in white letters above the address. A long dirt driveway led to the old, white, two-story house about five hundred feet back from the road. Between the road and the house was a field of tall, dry grass. A dilapidated antique tractor sat rusting in the middle of the field entangled in a mass of overgrown blackberry bushes.

Banyon and Angela were still parked in the middle of the road, taking in the scene, when Banyon glanced in his rearview mirror and noticed a dark green pickup truck approaching. He put the car in gear and moved over to the side of the road so the pickup could pass. He was surprised when, instead of passing, it slowed down and turned onto the Densmore property and headed down the long driveway toward the house.

"Must be Mrs. Densmore," Banyon said. "It looked like a woman behind the wheel."

The pickup came to a stop beside the house. The door on the driver's side opened and the woman stepped out. With two bags of groceries under her arms, she walked up to the house but paused a moment and turned, glancing across the field toward Banyon and Angela.

“Is she looking at us?” Angela asked, feeling a little uncomfortable.

“Yeah, I think so. She probably wonders who the heck is sitting up here at the edge of her property.”

The woman turned back and walked up the stairs to the large front porch. Juggling the two bags and her purse, she fumbled for her keys and unlocked the door. Just before entering, she turned once more and glanced toward the road. Then she went inside and closed the door. In a moment, they saw the curtain in one of the windows draw back just slightly and the woman peered out in their direction.

“Let’s go talk to her,” Angela suggested. “She’s probably worried about who we are, sitting up here.”

Banyon thought about it for a minute. “Okay, maybe you’re right. I wouldn’t want her to think someone’s stalking her or casing the house.”

Banyon drove slowly down the driveway and parked behind the pickup. They got out and walked up the front steps, knocked on the door and waited. In a few moments the door opened just a crack, secured by a chain-lock from the inside.

Banyon addressed the woman. “Mrs. Densmore?”

“Yes,” she answered cautiously. She looked to be in her 50s, plain but attractive, no makeup, and her graying blond hair hung loose to her shoulders.

“My name’s Zeke Banyon and this is my assistant, Angela Martin.”

The woman spoke slowly with a hint of a southern accent. “Yes? Can I help you?”

“Well, ma’am,” Banyon searched for words. “I’m the director of the Seattle Gospel Mission.”

“Oh... my,” she said softly. “Won’t you come in?”

The living room was tidy and quaintly old fashioned. Upon entering, one had the feeling of stepping through a time portal into the 1940s. Angela immediately noticed the intricate white doilies perfectly placed on each arm of the large brown sofa. The ornate tile-work framing the fireplace was patterned with strange geometric designs. The center tile at the top of the fireplace was slightly larger than the others and contained a complex design of interwoven triangles. Sitting next to the fireplace was an old rocking chair. One entire wall,

opposite the fireplace, consisted of dark wood shelving filled with books.

"Please," Mrs. Densmore said, "won't you have a seat?"

Banyon and Angela sat next to each other on the sofa as Mrs. Densmore gracefully seated herself in the old rocking chair.

"What can I do for you, Mr..."

"Banyon. Zeke Banyon. We... well, that is, I was wondering if you would mind if I ask you about your husband. You see, I took over the Seattle Gospel..."

"What is it you want to know?" she inquired before he could finish.

"Well, this may seem like a strange request and I don't want to upset you, but..."

"You found something, didn't you?" Mrs. Densmore asked as if she sensed what might be coming.

"Well, as a matter of fact, yes. But..."

"Let me guess," she said with a slight, knowing smile. "Does it have anything to do with numbers?"

"Yes," Banyon answered, somewhat surprised. "Then you know..."

"I know Patrick was searching for something."

"What do you mean?"

Mrs. Densmore thought for a second. Glancing over at the books on the shelf, she wondered just how to begin.

Banyon could feel her hesitation. "I don't mean to pry, Mrs. Densmore. I just thought..."

"No, no," she smiled. "It's all right. In fact I suspect perhaps it's not simply by coincidence that you've come here."

"How so? I'm not sure I..."

"It's just that I don't know where to begin," she interrupted. "May I get you both something to drink? A cup of tea, perhaps?"

"That sounds good," Banyon said, getting the impression this was going to be a rather interesting visit.

Mrs. Densmore got up and disappeared into the kitchen.

Banyon wandered over to the bookshelves to browse the titles. Clearly, Patrick Densmore had been interested in metaphysics and other unusual subjects. Many of the books appeared to be quite old and ranged in subject matter from UFOs and the *I Ching* to prophetic

visions and scholarly works on the Dead Sea Scrolls. An embossed design on the spine of one of the books caught Banyon's eye. It was basically two inverted triangles overlapping each other – similar to the familiar Star of David, common to the Jewish religious tradition. The triangles were enclosed in a circle. He ran his finger over the intricately embossed image as if it were a message in braille. He recognized it as the same design that was on the central tile above the opening to the fireplace. He pulled the old book from the shelf. It was titled *The Lost Scroll of Ezekiel and other Myths & Mysteries*.

"Ah," Mrs. Densmore said, returning with the tea on a silver tray. "I see you've discovered my husband's collection of esoteric books."

"So this was a hobby of his?" Banyon asked, putting the book back on the shelf.

"You could say that." Mrs. Densmore answered. She set the serving tray on the coffee table in front of them and returned to her rocking chair.

"An odd hobby for a man of the Cloth." Banyon said, smiling.

"Well," Mrs. Densmore began, "actually it was a bit more than a hobby. To tell you the truth he was obsessed with all of that sort of thing. It really began to absorb all of his attention about four years ago when he found a note tucked between the pages of an old book he found at a flea market. The book you were just looking at, actually."

Banyon's eyes narrowed. "Really? The one about... what was it? Something about Ezekiel?" He stood up and went over to the bookshelf and read the title again. News to me," he chuckled. "I didn't know there was a lost scroll of Ezekiel, mythical or otherwise." He paused for a moment and thumbed quickly through the pages. Then he said, "I noticed the symbol on the book is the same as that design there on the fireplace."

"Patrick seemed to think it was important somehow. That design, I mean. Something to do with what he called sacred geometry, I think. He had those tiles made by a local artist. You're welcome to borrow the book if you like."

"Thank you, yes. Are you sure you wouldn't mind?"

"Not at all."

"And the note your husband found inside the book?" Angela reminded her. "What was it?"

Mrs. Densmore got up and walked over to a big, oak, roll-top desk

and opened one of the small drawers inside. She pulled out a piece of old, yellowed paper. It was folded in half, and slightly torn at one corner. She handed it to Banyon.

The aged paper crinkled slightly as he carefully unfolded it.

“What’s it say?” Angela asked. “Read it aloud.”

Banyon began to read:

Entry, December 14, 1999.

I’m now more certain than ever that it was a machine.

I believe it still exists somewhere.

I’m going to find it. The numbers are coming together.

THE WHEEL OF EZEKIEL = 180

(half of a complete circle)

SPIN THE WHEEL = 144 (light?)

THE ALPHANUMBER = 144

180 + 144 = 324

REVERSE DIRECTION = 198, 198+324 = 522

THE WHEEL SPINS IN TWO DIRECTIONS = 360

Circle of Stone = 144

Reverse??? REVERSE THE NUMBER = 198

180+081=261=THE SPEED OF LIGHT IS THE KEY!

TWO SIX ONE = 144

The hub of the wheel = 171 = The Zero Point

(Counter Spiral = 171 = Reversed Spiral)

EAST OF THE HEAD = 117

= COMMUNICATE = NEGATIVE DARK

= NINE LIGHTS

THE WHEEL OF SOUND = 180
= THE WHEEL OF EZEKIEL

Sound? Light? Reverse? Stone???
TIME CHARIOT = 121 = WHEEL OF TIME
SOUTH OF FRANCE = 151

Banyon finished reading and no one spoke for several moments. He couldn't help but notice the number 144 appeared several times. It was not only the number value of his own name, it was the number he'd come across the night his brain felt like it had been barraged with a download of information. "Do you have any idea what any of this means, Mrs. Densmore?"

"I'm afraid I don't," she sighed. "Patrick and I were very close and talked with each other about nearly everything, really. But he didn't seem to want to talk much about this. I'm not sure he even knew what it meant. At least not entirely. I just don't know."

Banyon took a deep breath. "Mrs. Densmore, may I..."

"Keep the note?" she smiled. "Yes, of course. I have no use for it but apparently you do."

They thanked Mrs. Densmore for the hospitality and the information and headed back to town discussing their visit along the way.

"Well," Angela commented, "that was interesting!"

"Yeah, and some of those numbers in that note looked very familiar. Did you notice?"

"I noticed that. Let me see it again."

He took the note from his shirt pocket and handed to her. She studied it for a minute.

"Did you notice this?" she said, pointing to something on the paper.

He glanced over. "What is it?" he asked, trying to keep his eyes on the road.

"This number 522 is the only number that's underlined. And I'll bet Densmore is the one who underlined it."

"Why do say that?"

"Well, because look. The original writing is really faded. But this underline looks relatively new and it's a different color of ink. It looks

like a completely different kind of pen. It obviously wasn't underlined originally."

"522?" Banyon asked.

"Yes. It's the only number that's underlined."

"Hmm..." he said, shaking his head. "I don't have a clue."

"Maybe it *is* the clue."

Banyon shot her a glance and smiled.

"What are you smiling at?" she asked with a grin.

"I don't know," he answered, evasively. But he did know. He was smiling because he couldn't believe how fond he'd become of her. His feelings for her were something more than he liked to admit. Maybe he even loved her. He thought about that for a moment. *Love? No. Well, maybe. Who couldn't love a woman who would go along with all of this and not think I'm crazy?* "Do you think I'm crazy?" he asked.

She smiled. "You think I'd be here if I did?"

He shrugged. "I don't know. Maybe you're crazy too."

She hit him in the arm.

Ah, he thought. *She likes me.*"

Inside a warm and extravagantly appointed mansion on a small, remote island in the Bering Sea, nine men were gathered in the library. The room was heavy with the sweet smell of cigar smoke, brandy and expensive burgundy. They sat quietly. Waiting. The slow, rhythmic tick-tock of the pendulum on the large antique clock was amplified by the silence. Suddenly the double doors to the library opened and a tall thin man in a long dark coat entered the room. All eyes turned toward him.

"Gentleman," he began. "Mr. Banyon has read the notes."

The announcement was met with more silence. In a moment one of the members of the group - a tall, stately gentleman with thick white hair - slowly pushed his big, maroon leather chair back from the large round conference table and stood up. With a brandy in one hand and a cigar in the other, he walked solemnly over to the large bay window and stared out upon the endless gray sea. His outward expression was stoic. Inside he was smiling. "Very well, Mr. Walker," he said. "Thank you. You may go."

~10~

When Banyon and Angela arrived back at the office they studied the cryptic notes on the paper that Mrs. Densmore had turned over to them. The first sentences were perplexing. Banyon read them aloud:

"I'm now more certain than ever that it was a machine. And I believe it still exists somewhere. I'm going to find it. The numbers are coming together."

"What machine, I wonder?" Angela asked.

Banyon was puzzled, too. "I don't know," he said, scratching his head. "You want coffee?"

"Yes. Thanks. I noticed that number 144 sure pops up a lot here. In these notes, I mean."

"Yeah," Banyon said, plugging in the coffee maker. "The number of my name."

"Your name?"

"Yes. Remember that was one of the first things I found when I figured out how Densmore was arriving at the number values for the words and phrases. The alphanumeric value of Ezekiel Banyon is 144."

"What about your middle name? If you include that, then it changes the number."

"Yup, it would but I don't have a middle name."

"Really? That's weird. Everybody has a middle name," she teased.

Banyon laughed. "Well, I guess I'm not everybody. So what's *your* middle name?"

"Ann. Angela Ann Martin. Most people don't ever seem to like their middle name. Ever notice that? But I like mine. Got a ring to it, don't you think?"

"Very pretty. Let's see what it comes out to."

"Okay," she said, smiling. "Where's that alphanumeric chart you had?"

“Don’t need it,” Banyon gloated. “I’ve done so much of this I’ve got the letter values all memorized.”

He picked up the calculator and began quickly punching the buttons. When he finished he just sat there staring at the result. Finally he looked up and asked one more time, “Ann, you said, right? Angela Ann Martin?”

Angela nodded. “Yes. What’s it come to?”

“Hang on. I have to do this again. I must have made a mistake.”

“Why?” Angela laughed. What was it? 666?”

Banyon ran the numbers again. He looked up at her with raised eyebrows and shook his head.

Now Angela was really curious. “What? What is it?”

He slid the calculator across the desk so she could see for herself. She picked it up and stared at it. “Are you kidding me? Really? Can’t be,” she said.

“Figure it for yourself,” he said, getting up to turn the coffee maker on. “The chart is under the paper weight there.”

Angela grabbed the alphanumeric chart and the calculator and added the numbers:

ANGELA ANN MARTIN = 144

She laughed.

He looked over at her. “What’s so funny?”

“Well, I mean, it’s just such a bizarre coincidence!”

“Is it?”

“What? Bizarre?”

“No,” he said. “I mean coincidence. Is it just coincidence? Or is it something more?”

“Come on,” Angela protested. “I mean some things *are* just coincidence, you know.”

“Uh huh. I know. And some things aren’t. I mean go out on the street and get the names of a hundred people and how many of them do you think would add up to 144?”

“I don’t know,” she said, putting the calculator back on the desk. “There’d be some.”

“Yeah. But I’ll bet not many. And of all the people who could have come here to apply for the job like you did, how many actually came in?”

“I give up. How many?”

“One. You.”

“Hmm...” she thought for a second. “Well, I don’t know. So what do you think it is?”

Banyon handed her a cup of coffee and returned to his desk. He looked at her and grinned. “Destiny, my dear. Destiny.”

“Gosh!” she said, mockingly. “Ya think?”

They both laughed.

“So back to the notes,” Banyon said. “What else can we find to boggle our minds?”

“Well,” she replied, pointing to the paper, “says here that 144 is also the value of *spin the wheel* and then in parentheses it says *light* with a question mark. What do you make of that?”

He nodded. “Yeah. That’s interesting. I don’t know what it means. Seems like whoever wrote those notes must have thought there might be some connection between that number, 144, and light. Hand me the calculator.”

Angela slid the calculator across the top of the desk.

Banyon punched a few numbers. “Hmm... that’s interesting,” he muttered.

“What is it?”

“*Light* is 56.”

“So? What does 56 mean?”

“Well, for one thing it means it’s not 144.”

“What’s not 144? Light?”

“Yeah.”

“So why do you think who ever wrote this note put the word *light* after the number 144? This person had to know the word didn’t add up to 144. He must have had some other reason for thinking there might be a connection.”

“True,” Banyon agreed with a sigh. “But what was the reason?”

“Your guess is as good as mine.”

Banyon nodded and took a sip of his coffee. “I came up with that number, 144, a while back, when I was studying that information about the Mayans. And I discovered how the alphabet fit into the Mayan calendar grid and the word, *key*, appeared nine times. Remember?”

“I remember. But what’s the number 144 have to do with it?”

“One of the key numbers in the Mayan system was 144,000 and it’s the number mentioned a couple times in the Bible. Remember I told you about the thing that numerologists call harmonics?”

“Oh, yes. 144 is a harmonic of 144,000.”

“Exactly,” Banyon said, pulling a notepad from his desk drawer. “Here are the notes I jotted down that night.”

ENGLISH ALPHABET CIRCLE = 189
= THE ENLIGHTENED ONE =

SQUARE OF TWELVE

THE SACRED ALPHABET CIRCLE = 198

$198 - 189 = 9$

THE AREA OF A CIRCLE = 120
= THE MIND OF GOD

TWENTY SIX DEGREES = 222
= THE ENGLISH ALPHABET CIRCLE

“The number 189,” he continued, “caught my eye because I recognized it has the same digits as the address of the shelter here, 198 Post Street. Just a different arrangement of the digits. Anyway I noticed that twelve squared is 144. That’s when I started thinking about the 144,000 in the Bible and all that stuff.”

“And...?”

“And... I don’t know. It just struck me at that moment that this number – this 144 - might be really significant somehow. And now we see it in these cryptic frigging little notes.”

After a minute of silence Angela sighed and shook her head. “I don’t know what to think. It’s all just so... weird. You know?”

Banyon got up and paced the room a couple times. “What’s the next thing in the notes there?”

“Um... It says *the alphanumber* equals 144.” Then she looked puzzled. “What’s *the alphanumber* mean?”

“I’m not sure. Check it out on the calculator”.

Angela punched in the number values of the letters in the phrase, *the alphanumber*. “Yup,” she said. “It’s 144.”

“Hmm...” Banyon mumbled to himself. “Alphanumeric. Alphanumeric. What is an alphanumeric?”

“That’s what I asked you,” Angela said. “Alpha implies alphabet. So I guess...”

“Yes, alphabet. Or letter. Alpha number. Letter number. Letter number. Alpha number.”

“You say toe-may-toe I say toe-mah-toe,” Angela grinned as she mimicked the lyrics to an old song.

Banyon groaned.

“Sorry,” she muttered sheepishly.

“Wait a minute,” he said. “Let me see Densmore’s notes.”

She handed him the paper.

“Here,” he said, coming around his desk to show her. “Look here where it says *TWO-SIX-ONE equals 144.*”

“Yes? So?”

“These are numbers that are spelled out as words. T-W-O, S-I-X, and 0-N-E! Word-numbers! Letter-numbers!”

“Of course!” Angela said, catching on. “Alphanumbers!”

“Yes! That’s got to be it! An alphanumber is simply a number spelled out as a word! Check it out on the calculator. Punch in the number values for the letters that spell *TWO SIX ONE* and see what you get.”

Angela punched in the numbers and showed it to him. The combined alphanumeric values of the words TWO SIX ONE was, indeed, 144.

“Damn, we’re good!” she said. They high-fived each other and laughed.

“Got that right!” Banyon said.

“Just one thing.”

“What’s that?”

“What do we do with it?”

“Well now,” Banyon admitted, “that’s a good question. What if we calculate the values of other alphanumbers? Let’s see what we get.”

“Sure,” Angela agreed. “But which ones? How would you know which numbers to convert into words? How would you know what you’re looking for? Numbers are infinite! You could spend the rest of your life converting numbers into words and calculating their alphanumeric values. Right?”

“Yeah. Well, keep it in mind. I think there’s something important there. What else can we figure out in those notes?”

“Well, there is this reverse direction thing.”

REVERSE DIRECTION = 198, $198 + 324 = \underline{522}$

THE WHEEL SPINS IN TWO DIRECTIONS = 360

“Right,” Banyon said. “And there’s that 522, underlined. I wonder why he underlined it? I’m guessing it’s a key to something. What’s 522 plus that mysterious 144?”

Angela punched it into the calculator. “Oh, you’ll like this. It’s 666!”

Banyon rolled his eyes. “Not that again. The number gives me the creeps. What about 522 plus that number right below it there in the notes?”

“The 360?” Angela asked.

“Right. What is it?”

“Um, let’s see... 522 and 360 is 882.”

Banyon wrote 882 on the back of an envelope. “Well, that’s kind of interesting,” he said.

“What is?”

“What’s the reverse of 882?”

“Oh!” she said. “It’s 288! It’s the reverse of two times 144! That’s too weird.”

Banyon grinned. “You keep saying that.”

“Well it is!”

Banyon was scribbling more numbers on the envelope. “Here’s something. Instead of adding 522 and 360, if we subtract 360 from 522 we get 162.”

“So?”

“So look at the notes. It says TWO-SIX-ONE is 144. We just confirmed that for ourselves. And 162 is the exact reverse of 261! You see? ONE-SIX-TWO is 144 also! Remember weeks ago when we were talking about what I called the mirrored numbers?”

“The mirrored numbers?”

“Yes! We were talking about Revelation, 13th chapter, 18th verse, where it mentions the number 666. And I showed you how 13 times 18 is 234? Then I reversed it and added them together and found the sum was 666! Remember?”

“Oh yeah! I do remember. Hey, you were on to something and didn’t even know it!”

“Well, I didn’t know for sure but I suspected it. At least on some level.”

“So this reversal idea is somehow important to all of this... this... whatever this is.”

“It must be.”

“You know we just might crack this thing yet,” she said, sounding confident.

“Yeah. But that 522 has me stumped.”

Angela downed the last drop of coffee in her cup. “You know what?”

“What?”

“I’m hungry.”

“Marios?”

“Chinese.”

“Sounds good. Let’s go.”

Banyon grabbed the book that Mrs. Densmore loaned him and took it along to the restaurant. During dinner they discussed the mysterious note but they were at a loss as to what any of it might really mean.

“Okay,” Banyon said, pushing a couple of empty plates to the side. “Let’s check out this book. Obviously it’s the chapter on this alleged lost scroll of Ezekiel that the writer of these notes was interested in. Got to be some clues there.”

He opened to the chapter in question and began to read to himself while Angela patiently sipped her tea. After several minutes he nudged her on the arm.

“Hey, this is really interesting,” he said. “I don’t know if I believe it but it’s pretty intriguing.”

“What is it?”

“Well supposedly there’s this scroll believed to be from the hand of the same Ezekiel that’s in the Bible. You remember the story of Ezekiel? He had that strange encounter with what he called the spirit of God but as he described the... whatever it was that he saw... it was unlike any description of any other prophet’s vision of God.”

“Oh yeah,” Angela nodded. “In fact, I remember seeing on the cover of one of those supermarket tabloids that the thing Ezekiel saw was really an alien space ship!”

He turned and stared at her with a dumbfounded expression.

“What’s the matter?” she asked.

“What you just said.”

“What... the spaceship? C’mon.”

“That’s what they’re speculating in this book!”

“Are you serious?”

“Yeah!”

Angela could see the wheels were turning in his head.

“You know,” he said, “now as I think back on Ezekiel’s whole description of that what-ever-it-was, it really was very strange. In fact... oh man, I really gotta go back and read that again.”

“Read what?”

“The first few pages of the book of Ezekiel in the Bible. I mean now that I think about it... I mean from a modern perspective... I don’t know, but it did sort of read like a description of some kind of a mechanical device. And it came down from the sky, too.”

“Well now! Did you say a mechanical device?”

“Yes. Why?”

“Look here!” She unfolded the page of cryptic notes and pointed to the first couple of sentences:

Entry, December 14, 1999.

I’m now more certain than ever that it was a machine.

I believe it still exists somewhere.

I’m going to find it. The numbers are coming together.

Banyon’s eyes lit up. “Now we’re getting somewhere! Says here in this chapter that the so-called *Lost Scroll of Ezekiel* tells about another encounter Ezekiel had with another strange craft. But this craft was apparently a little different than the one described in the Bible, according to the description.” Banyon suddenly hesitated.

Angela looked at him. “What’s wrong?”

“I just noticed something. Here in the book. It talks about Rennes le Chateau. It’s part of the story! I can’t believe it! That’s the place in the South of France that Father Caldwell told me about when I called him to find out about the fellow who formerly ran the shelter. Caldwell had recently taken a trip to see the place, this Rennes le Chateau. I remember he said the story of the church at this little village was really interesting in a mysterious way. He said I should look into it sometime.”

“Hmm...” Angela mused. “Another coincidence? Go on. What else does it say there?”

“Okay. Well, it says the original scroll, this *Lost Scroll of Ezekiel*, eventually ended up under the flooring of the church at Rennes le Chateau where it was discovered by a priest named Saunière about 1886. How it got there in the first place is a mystery. Anyway, Saunière had just become the appointed caretaker of the dilapidated old church. He was renovating the church and when he tore up a portion of the flooring he discovered the scroll. Then at this point the story gets complicated.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, legend has it that Saunière also found additional scrolls under the floor but those scrolls are said to have had something to do with the *sangreal*, the so called Holy Grail.”

“The Holy Grail? The chalice Christ drank from at the Last Supper?”

“Says here that according to some researchers the Holy Grail wasn’t really a chalice. They say the term Holy Grail was actually a metaphor for the body of Mary Magdalene. They believe she was actually married to Jesus. So, rather than a mere cup containing the blood of Christ, symbolically or otherwise, it was the Magdalene who was the actual grail, as it were. She was the vessel containing the bloodline of Jesus.”

“The bloodline? You mean...”

“Meaning she bore the offspring of Jesus Christ.”

“Ah!” Angela said, nodding her head. “Like in that novel, *The DaVinci Code*!”

“Right! Anyway, supposedly those scrolls ended up in the hands of a secret society known as the Knights Templar. But it doesn’t go into any more detail other than to recommend a couple of books on the subject. The author only mentions this in order to caution the reader not to confuse the grail part of the story with this mysterious scroll which apparently branches off into a story of its own, the story of the *Lost Scroll of Ezekiel*.”

“Interesting. So, go on. What else?”

“Okay. Well, getting back to the Ezekiel scroll, apparently this Saunière fellow sold the scroll to yet another secret society of Christian mystics known as the Order of the New Dawn that was

founded around the year 1350. The Order was based in France but it also had a branch in England. Legend has it that one of the members of this English branch of the Order - someone known only as Brother Hiram - had the gift of prophecy. The ability to see into the future. Here, listen to this.”

Banyon read directly from the book:

“The Order of the New Dawn wanted the message of the scroll to be revealed to the world but Hiram, glimpsing into the future, realized the knowledge which would be gained from it, as well as from the mechanical device itself, could not even be understood until a time when science and technology were at a point where it would make sense, at least to some degree. Looking into the future, the developments in quantum physics of the late 20th and early 21st centuries seemed to be the clues alerting Brother Hiram to the idea that this would be the time when such information could most likely be understood. This mystic priest of the Order realized that the survival of the human race was going to be at a threshold in the 21st century. He foresaw a global catastrophe brought about by the appearance of a great dragon coming to earth from heaven. This had to be prevented if humans were to survive. He understood that the year 2012 would be a pivotal point in the continuation of the human race. While he did not understand the exact nature of what would happen in 2012, he understood it represented a crucial window of opportunity for the next step in the evolution of the human race on this planet.”

Angela looked at him. “You recognize that date, don’t you?”

“Yeah,” Banyon said, thinking back to his reading about the Mayan culture. “That’s the end date of the Mayan calendar!”

“Exactly. What are the odds? Or is what you just read nothing more than what most people think it is. A legend. A myth. A tale made up by some guy who knew about the Mayan prophecy of the end of a great cycle of time and he simply thought it would be clever to include the same date in his fabricated tale.”

Banyon lit up a cigarette and offered one to Angela. “I don’t know what to believe,” he said. “It’s all so... well... unbelievable.”

“Understatement of the year.”

“Yeah. But on the other hand look at all the stuff we’ve found that seems to support the whole crazy idea.”

“One thing I don’t get,” Angela said.

“What’s that?”

“Well the book you have there just has that one chapter about this so- called *Lost Scroll of Ezekiel*.”

“So?”

“So that whole chapter has nothing in it that would lead anyone to write most of the things that are in the notes that were found inside the book.”

“What are you getting at?”

Angela unfolded the old notepaper. “Okay, Densmore found these notes folded up inside that book you’re reading from, right?”

“Right.”

“Okay, look at all this. Look what’s written in these notes. There’s nothing in what you just read from the book that even suggests such phrases as ‘*the wheel spins in two directions*’ or ‘*the alphanumber*’ or ‘*reverse the number*’ or ‘*east of the head*’ or any of these other phrases.”

“What’s your point?”

“Well, think about it. How did the writer of these notes come up with these specific phrases? Where did they come from? Why was he so interested in finding the alphanumeric values of these specific phrases?”

Banyon nodded in agreement. “Good question. Maybe he had access to more information from another source?”

“That’s what I was thinking. And that means if we could find out who wrote these cryptic notes we might be able to find out where the *Lost Scroll of Ezekiel* is!”

“Hmm... you just might be right. Look here,” Banyon said, pointing to the bottom of the page. “There’s a footnote.”

“What’s it say?”

“It says, *Rumor has persisted for years that there exists a short manuscript which has come to be known as the Ezekiel Code. It is said to contain encoded clues revealing the secret location of the Lost Scroll of Ezekiel. While little else is known about this manuscript, one version of the story indicates that it was penned in the English language by the same Brother Hiram. Interestingly, he did not use the alphabet or the language as it was in his time. Having the gift of foresight, he knew that alphabets and languages*

change, sometimes significantly, over long periods of time. Knowing this, he wrote the manuscript using the alphabet and the language as it had evolved by the 21st century. In this way, the encrypted clues (thought to be a form of gematria using the English language) could not be decoded until the time was right."

"Well, well!" Angela exclaimed. "So now we know why the numerology stuff is part of all of this!"

"So it would seem," Banyon agreed.

"So our anonymous note writer may actually have had access to the Ezekiel Code which may have led him to the location of the scroll!"

"Exactly. Question is, does he still have the manuscript? Or, for that matter, maybe even the scroll itself?"

"Right. And who is he? How can we find out?"

Banyon had an idea. He flipped open the cover of the book. There, stamped on the inside cover, was the name of the bookstore where the book had been purchased.

"Check this out," he said with a grin.

Angela read the faded imprint:

**SIRIUS BOOKS & GIFTS
EVERETT, WA**

"Excellent!" she said. "Tomorrow we'll look up the address and pay those folks a visit. Who knows, maybe with a little luck we might even be able to track down our mysterious note writer!"

"Think so? Seems like a long shot."

"But a shot worth taking, don't you think?" The look of excitement on her face was irresistible.

"Absolutely!" he said, dumping his skepticism. "What the hell. What have we got to lose?"

THE ~11~ EZEKIEL CODE

A black sedan followed closely behind Banyon and Angela as they drove north along State Highway 99 toward the city of Everett in search of the bookstore.

“It should be just up ahead on the right,” Angela said as she moved into the right lane.

The highway was lined on both sides with a variety of small business establishments, everything from auto repair shops to hair salons, gas stations, restaurants, supermarkets, and a giant Costco store that took up two blocks.

Banyon looked around. “I’ve driven by here lots of times and I don’t remember ever seeing a bookstore.”

“Were you looking for a bookstore?”

He shrugged. “Not really.”

“Maybe that’s why you didn’t see it.”

“I suppose.”

“Hey!” Angela blurted, suddenly. “There’s the sign!”

“Where?”

“Right there. That little hand-painted sign on the light pole!”

He couldn’t believe she actually spied the sign. It was just a small hand-painted board attached to a wooden light pole at the entrance to a parking lot where there were several small businesses in one older single-story building. Angela pulled into the lot and they looked for the bookstore.

“There it is,” Banyon said, pointing to the last shop at the far end of the building.

Parking was easy since there were no other cars in the spaces in front of the bookstore.

“Not exactly a booming business,” Banyon commented.

“That’s for sure. Do you have the book with you?”

“Yeah, right here.”

“Well,” she said, taking a deep breath, “let’s see what we can find out.”

They didn't notice the black sedan pulling into the lot as they walked toward the entrance to the bookstore.

Once inside they could tell immediately this wasn't exactly your modern Barnes & Noble. The lighting was rather dim, the atmosphere was quiet, and it had the musty yet oddly pleasant smell of an old attic. The inventory was mostly used books and the place had all the look and feel of a mom & pop operation. The tall rows of shelves, made of unpainted wood, were marked according to subject matter with little hand-lettered tags on colored paper.

The sales counter, toward the back of the store, was cluttered with small stacks of advertising flyers from local businesses. A young man in his mid-twenties with shoulder length blond hair was sitting on a stool behind the counter reading one of those supermarket tabloids that carry stories about three headed babies and images of the Virgin Mary on old tree trunks.

"Excuse me," Banyon said, addressing the young man. "I was wondering if you might be able to help us."

The young man looked up. "Hi. What can I do for you?"

"Well," Banyon hesitated, "this might sound a little strange..."

"Hey," the young man smiled, "I'm reading about a lady who just gave birth to an alien baby with lizard skin. What could be stranger than that?"

Banyon laughed and was relieved to see the fellow at least had a sense of humor. "My name is Zeke Banyon," he said, handing the young man his business card. "And this is my friend, Angela."

The young man acknowledged Angela with a nod.

Banyon handed him Densmore's book. "We came across this book," he explained, "and noticed it was purchased here and - I know it's a long shot - but we wondered if there was any way to find out who might have purchased it from you."

The young man looked at the imprint of the store's name on the inside cover. Then he closed the book, smiled, and gently ran his fingers across the title on the front cover. "Well," he said, looking up over his wire rimmed glasses, "I'm afraid I wouldn't have any record of who bought the book. I mean, you know, we don't ask the name of everybody who buys a book from us."

Banyon sighed. "Damn. We kind of figured that would be the case. Well, thanks anyway."

“No problem,” the young man replied. “Sorry I couldn’t help.”

Banyon and Angela turned to leave but stopped in their tracks when the young man spoke again. “But I can tell you who owned the book originally, if you’re interested,” he said, offhandedly.

They did an about-face and walked back to the counter.

Banyon looked at him. “Say again?”

“The book,” the young man explained. “It belonged to my father.”

Angela shook her head. “Your father?”

The young man nodded. “Can I ask why you guys are so interested in this book?”

“Well,” Banyon began, but then he hesitated, not exactly sure where to start. “It’s kind of a long story. See I run the Seattle Gospel Mission downtown and the man who had the job before me found this book at a flea market. Well, one thing led to another and we were just curious as to who might have owned the book before him.”

The young man looked puzzled. “Why?” he asked.

“Um,” Banyon started, but Angela abruptly jumped in.

“There was a note folded up inside the book,” she explained. “It had information on it that interested us. I’m a student of anthropology and Mr. Banyon studied for the priesthood and...”

The young man laughed. “You guys talk like my father used to talk. He thought he was Indiana Jones or something. Always on the hunt for the next big mystery. Ancient artifacts, old books. You name it. Maybe you’ve heard of him. His name was Frank McClintock. My name’s Jason, by the way.”

“Nice to meet you, Jason,” Banyon said. “No, I’m afraid we’ve never heard of your father but he sounds like an interesting man. You said his name *was* Frank McClintock. Past tense. I gather he’s no longer alive?”

“Yeah. This was his bookstore. He passed away back in December of 1999 and my sister and I inherited the place. She handles all the bookwork. I just try to keep the place going but, as you can see, we don’t get a lot of business. It’s pretty tough.”

“We’re sorry to hear that,” Angela said. “So this book belonged to your father?”

“Yeah. He had a whole mess of books like that. Metaphysics, occult, ancient mysteries, stuff like that. I put a lot of his old books out on the shelf for sale after he died. That one you’ve got there was one of them.”

“And the note inside the book,” she asked. “Would you know anything about that?”

“Doesn’t ring a bell,” Jason said, shaking his head. “Do you have it with you?”

Angela reached into her purse and pulled out a piece of paper. “This isn’t the original,” she said, handing it to him. “It’s a photocopy.”

Jason took the copy and examined it. “Yup, this is my dad’s handwriting, all right.”

“Are you sure?” Banyon asked. Several butterflies fluttered inside his stomach.

“Oh yeah, positive,” Jason said. He continued to read the note. “This is weird stuff here. What the heck does it mean?” he asked, handing it back to Angela.

“That’s what we’d like to know,” Banyon said.

Jason pushed his glasses up onto his forehead and smiled. “My dad would have liked you guys. There weren’t a lot of people he could talk to about these things.”

“I can imagine,” Banyon chuckled.

“Would you like to see the rest of his collection?” Jason asked, getting up from the stool behind the counter.

The butterflies fluttered once more inside Banyon’s stomach. “The rest of his collection?”

Jason motioned for them to come around the counter. Then he opened a door to a back room. “This way,” he said.

The back room, dimly lit by a couple of bare light bulbs hanging from the ceiling, was full of books, everywhere, on shelves, on tables, and in boxes. Evidently it was inventory waiting to go out to the front shelves for sale. Jason pointed to an old leather trunk in the shadows under a table.

“This is it,” he said, sliding the heavy trunk out for them to see. “This is what I have left.” He opened the trunk, exposing the contents. “I sold most of his other books. Just haven’t gotten around to these yet.”

Banyon and Angela knelt down to take a look. There were some intriguing titles, mostly dealing with ancient mysteries and secret societies.

“Wow,” Banyon said, almost in a whisper. Then he turned to

Jason. "Would you mind if we looked through some of these?"

Jason shrugged. "Go ahead. I haven't priced any of them yet but if there's something you want just let me know and we'll work something out. I'll be out front if you need me."

"Great. Thanks," Angela said.

Jason disappeared through the door and resumed his reading out behind the counter.

"Trusting soul, eh?" Banyon quipped.

"No kidding," Angela said as she slowly rummaged through the various titles in the old trunk. "Can you believe our luck? I mean, I can't believe we just stumbled into this!"

"This old trunk's been around awhile, that's for sure," Banyon observed, giving it a visual once-over. Then he noticed the tattered black fabric that lined the inside of the lid was sagging down. He tucked it back up but it refused to stay put.

"Will you forget that?" Angela said, seemingly annoyed. "Help me look through this stuff. Who knows what we might find."

"Wait a minute," Banyon said. He now noticed the fabric was sagging because something behind it was weighting it down. "There's something under this lining." He carefully tugged at the edge of the lining to pull a little portion of it free from the lid. "There's something back behind here," he said, trying to reach it with the tips of his fingers.

"What is it?"

"I don't know."

Finally, without actually ripping the fabric he managed to grasp whatever it was with two fingers and slid it out.

It was a large old brown paper envelope. He turned it over and back again, looking for some indication of what it might contain. But there was no writing on it. It was sealed only by a small copper clasp. He looked at Angela. "Should I?"

She shrugged but the look in her eyes said, *yes*. A large, unmarked envelope in an old chest full of esoteric books in the shadows of a back room of a used-book store was just too tempting to be ignored.

Banyon opened it and pulled out a wrinkled sheet of parchment, yellowed with age. He maneuvered it out of the shadows into a slightly better light. They both looked at it and then at each other, wide-eyed, as they realized what they had.

“Oh my god,” Angela gasped. “That’s it. The Ezekiel Code!”

“Find something interesting?” Jason asked, suddenly appearing behind them in the doorway.

Startled, and still kneeling next to the old chest, Banyon and Angela turned to face him.

“Um...” Banyon stammered. “Yes, actually. Well maybe. We’re not sure. I wonder if...”

“Whatever it is you can have it,” Jason said. “Just be careful.”

“Careful?” Angela asked. “What do you mean?”

Jason took a couple steps toward them. “I mean I think whatever you have there might be what caused my father’s death.”

Angela and Banyon stood up slowly, shocked by what Jason was saying.

“What are you talking about?” Banyon asked.

“My dad was killed in a hit and run right out here on the street. They never found who did it.”

A look of genuine sympathy crossed Angela’s face. “I’m so sorry,” she said. “You mean you think it was intentional and not an accident?”

Jason shook his head. “I don’t think it was any accident. A similar incident happened to him downtown in Seattle just a week earlier but that time he managed to jump out of the way.”

“Could’ve been just a coincidence,” Banyon suggested.

“I don’t think so,” Jason countered. “Dad was pretty excited those last couple of weeks. Said he was close to discovering some big secret or something. I didn’t pay much attention really because I’d heard him say things like that any number of times. Like I said, he fancied himself some kind of an Indiana Jones and there was always the next big mystery to go after. But he started getting some weird phone calls just a few days before he was killed.”

“What kind of phone calls?” Banyon asked.

“Some guy. I don’t know who it was. A couple times I took the call and the guy asked if Frank was in. Both times Dad happened to be out and I told the guy he wasn’t here. I asked if I could take a message and the guy just hung up. Kind of sounded like he had an Italian accent or something. I don’t know. It was just strange. One time, though, Dad was here and he took the call and I don’t know what the guy said but Dad seemed pretty weirded out about it.”

“How do you mean?” Banyon asked.

"I don't know. Just sort of on edge I guess you might say. I asked him what was wrong but he didn't want to talk about it."

"Did you tell all this to the police?" Angela asked.

"Yeah, I told 'em. But what could they do?"

"I see," Banyon said, somewhat at a loss for words.

"So anyway," Jason went on, "that's what I meant about being careful. I don't know what it is you found there and I don't think I want to know. Maybe it's nothing. But if it has anything to do with whatever dad was into those last few weeks then you're welcome to it. I'd just as soon not have it around here. I wasn't born with the same sense of adventure that my dad had. If you know what I mean."

Banyon and Angela looked at each other wondering what they'd gotten themselves into.

Feeling a bit awkward, Banyon cleared his throat. "I don't know what to say. That's quite a story. But I guess we will take this envelope then if that's what you want."

"Be my guest," Jason said. "In fact, why don't you just take the trunk and everything that's in it with my blessing."

That took Banyon by surprise. "You mean...? But, how much do you want for it?"

"Just take it. I'd as soon just be rid of it, really."

"No," Angela said. "We couldn't do that. After all..."

"Really," Jason said, firmly. "Just take it. I have a gut feeling my dad would want you to have it. Sounds kinda crazy I guess but if you knew my dad like I did..." He left the thought hanging.

"Thank you," Banyon said. "We appreciate it."

Jason nodded. "I have to get back out front. I just heard a customer come in the door. Can the two of you get the trunk?"

"We can get it," Banyon said.

Jason turned and went to tend to the customer.

Banyon looked at Angela. "Wow," he said in a hushed tone. "What the heck have we stumbled into?"

"Something that might get us killed is my guess."

"Let's hope not. I'm guessing Jason's father probably hadn't yet found the scroll. But he was probably close to figuring it out."

"Yeah. Too close, apparently."

"I don't know. That whole hit and run thing still could have just been a coincidence, you know."

“Uh huh,” Angela said, skeptically. “There sure have been a lot of coincidences the last few weeks.”

“So you think we should just drop the whole thing?” Banyon asked. “Give up the chase? Hey, you’re the one who said you were always up for a good mystery!”

Angela stared at Banyon for several seconds without saying anything.

“Well?” he prompted her for a response.

“I don’t know,” she said, finally. “Let’s just get this trunk into the car and worry about it later.”

“Amen to that,” Banyon agreed. “Let’s get the hell out of here.”

They each picked up an end of the trunk and made their way through the back room door. They navigated around the sales counter and headed toward the front door. Jason was placing some books on a shelf. He turned and nodded his head as if to say goodbye – and good luck.

When they reached the front door they found it blocked by a tall dark man in a black trench coat. He stood there for a moment and then slowly stepped aside. Angela threw a quick glance at Banyon. Banyon put his shoulder to the door and pushed it open. Once outside, they managed to get the trunk into the back seat of the car and they drove away without wasting any time.

The black sedan followed just a few cars behind.

~12~

*And a voice spoke unto me saying,
this miracle is for a generation yet to come.
A son of man bearing your name will come*

Back at the Seattle Gospel Mission, Banyon and Angela were met at the front door by Old Tom.

“Movin’ in?” Old Tom asked, holding the door open for them as they maneuvered the heavy trunk inside.

“What?” Banyon asked, nearly out of breath.

"The trunk! Looks like yer movin' in."

"Oh this?" Banyon grinned, trying to sound nonchalant. "No. Just some old stuff to go through."

"Looks heavy."

"You have no idea," Angela spoke up, straining to keep from dropping her end.

Tom moved forward. "Need some help with it?"

Banyon shook his head. "No thanks, Tom. We got it."

They made their way down the hall toward Banyon's office. The phone rang just as they got in through the door. They set the trunk on the floor and shoved it over next to the desk. Banyon paused a moment to catch a breath before answering the phone. "Seattle Gospel Mission. Can I help you?"

"Ezekiel Banyon?" the man on the other end of the line inquired.

"That would be me," Banyon said. "What can I do for you?"

"My name's Kline. Doctor Alan Kline. I'm a professor of Sociology at the Shorewood Community College. I got your number from Jason McClintock. He called me a few minutes ago."

"Jason?" Banyon asked, a bit surprised. "From the bookstore?"

"Yes. I was a close friend of his father, Frank McClintock."

"Oh?"

"We need to talk."

"I'm listening," Banyon said, now intrigued.

"Not on the phone. Could we meet somewhere?"

"What's this about?"

"Information."

"What sort of information?"

"I think you know."

Banyon hesitated for a moment, glancing over at Angela. "Okay," he said. "Where would you like to meet?"

"My office at the college. It's in the Foster building on the campus, across from the administration building. We can talk there without being disturbed."

"All right. When?"

"This evening? Say around seven-thirty?"

"We can do that."

"Good. When you come in the front door just take the stairs to the second floor. My office is down the hall to your left at the top of the

stairs. You'll see my name on the door. Alan Kline."

"Top of the stairs and to the left. Got it."

"All right," Kline said. "About seven-thirty then."

"About seven-thirty. We'll be there."

Banyon hung up the phone and leaned back in his chair with a look on his face that Angela couldn't quite read.

"Okay, I give up," she said. "What the heck was that all about and where are we going?"

"That was some guy named Kline. A professor at Shorewood Community College. Says he got my number from Jason back at the bookstore. Apparently Jason called him just after we left."

"What's he want?"

"Says he was a friend of Jason's father. He wants to meet with us. Tonight. Seven-thirty."

"What for?"

"I don't know. He just said he had information."

"Information about what?"

"Whatever it is he didn't seem to want to talk about it over the phone. It's got to be something to do with what we found in the trunk."

"How do we know this guy is who he says he is?" Angela asked, recalling the fate of Jason's dad.

"Yeah, you're right," Banyon said after thinking about it for a moment. "We could call Jason and ask him."

"Good idea," Angela agreed. She got the phone directory and handed it to him.

Banyon looked up the number and made the call. "No answer," he said. He looked at his watch. "It's after five."

Angela nodded. "Maybe he's closed up and gone home."

"Yeah. Well, look, if you don't want to go with me to see this Kline fellow, that's okay. But I'm going to take a chance. The guy sounded on the level. And it's at the college. There'll be people around. I mean what could happen?"

Angela lit up a cigarette and sat in the chair across from Banyon's desk. She looked at him without saying anything. After a few moments she got up and paced back and forth. *I do like a good mystery as much as the next guy*, she argued with herself. *But I also like staying alive*. Finally she walked over and kicked the side of the

trunk. "Damn it," she said. "All right, I'll go with you."

Banyon had to chuckle at her little burst of attitude. This was a peek at a side of her he hadn't seen before. "You sure?" he asked.

"No, but I'll go anyway and hope to God you're right about this guy."

Banyon smiled. "I really don't think there's anything to worry about."

"Yeah. Famous last words," she came back, still not entirely comfortable with the idea.

Banyon pushed himself back from his desk, reached into the drawer, unlocked a small metal box and pulled out a handgun.

"Would this make you feel any safer?" he asked.

"What the...?" Angela started. "Where did you get that? What the hell are you doing with a pistol?"

"I've had it for a while," he said, squinting one eye as he slowly aimed the pistol at the coffee pot. "Just seemed like a good idea, seeing as how this isn't exactly the safest part of town. I mean, you never know."

"Okay, Wyatt Earp, you can put it away now. I hate guns."

"So you don't want me to bring it?"

"All right," she relented with a heavy sigh. "Go ahead. Bring it." She crushed out her cigarette and shook her head. "I can't believe this is happening. This is all completely nuts, you know."

"Yes," he replied, leaning over the desk and reaching out to hold her hand. "But have you ever had such a good time?"

"Oh yeah," she said. "You've got a gun in your hand, we're about to go visit some strange man who calls us out of the blue, claiming to be a friend of a guy who somehow ended up with an ancient manuscript and who then got an unpleasant phone call from some guy with an Italian accent and then turned around and got run over by a car and died. Yeah, I can't recall ever having had such a good time."

Banyon laughed. "Well all righty then!" he said, getting up to make a pot of coffee. "Let the good times roll!"

The only thing Angela rolled was her eyes, wondering what she'd gotten herself into. *It'll be okay*, she tried to convince herself. *If anyone tries to get us Zeke will pull out his gun and blow their brains out*. The very thought made her laugh. Not because it was funny but because it was all just so absurd. *I only came here looking for a part-*

time job. Now I'm chasing down ancient manuscripts with a guy who thinks he's Wyatt Earp. What the hell could be next?

~13~

Banyon glanced over at Angela as they drove into the parking lot of the Shorewood Community College. "See? I told you," he said. "Look at all the cars here. Night classes. There's going to be people all over the campus. Nothing to worry about. Except for a little rain."

Angela looked around, surveying the area. "All right. So far, so good."

After parking the car they walked toward the campus, huddling under Angela's umbrella.

"So how do we find the Foster building?" Angela wondered.

Banyon noticed a student sitting on a sheltered bench near the paved walkway. "Let's ask that guy over there."

"Excuse me," Banyon addressed the student. "Can you point us to the Foster building?"

The student pointed toward an older building surrounded by large trees. "See that building over there? That's the administration building. The Foster building is right behind it."

"Thanks," Banyon said.

Once under the sheltered entrance to the Foster building Angela shook the rain off her umbrella and closed it up. They entered the brightly lit building, took the stairs to the second floor and walked down the hall as Kline had instructed. The hall was lined with faculty offices. They read the nameplates on the doors as they strolled along.

"Here it is," Angela said. "Dr. Alan Kline."

Banyon rapped lightly on the door. Almost immediately the door opened and they were greeted by a short, middle-aged man with thick,

**To purchase
the 675-page
high quality paperback
edition of**

The Ezekiel Code

A Metaphysical/Mystery/Adventure/Thriller

**please visit the official
web site:**

**www.ezekielcode.com
or go directly to
amazon.com.**

2012 is coming...

The clock is ticking...

The code must be deciphered...

And only one man can save the planet...

If he can just figure out how...

Before it's too late.

GARY VAL TENUTA