

FORTEAN TIMES 176
December 2003
Special Conspiracy Issue, page 60

The Da Vinci Code

Dan Brown

Bantam Press, 2003

Hb, 646 pp, £10.99, ISBN 0593052447

One of the best ways to disseminate *Fortune* information, it seems, is to weave it into a narrative as Dan Brown has done with great aplomb in his *Da Vinci Code*. It makes it more palatable for the uninitiated and, in Brown's case, lands him at the top of the *New York Times* list for countless weeks.

The story - yes, it is fiction – begins with the brutal murder and sudden murder of Louvre curator Jacques Sauniere, and the subsequent acquisition by Robert Langdon, the visiting Harvard University professor of Religious Symbology, of the crime. He and Sauniere's alienated granddaughter decode the hermetic clues the curator left scattered around the artwork, all the while avoiding both the French police and her father's killer.

The clues point not to the identity of the police's murder suspect (Langdon), but to a series of further clues and revelations about the deeper secret guarded by Sauniere – the location of the Priory of Sion's keystone which will, in turn, lead to the Holy Grail.

It sounds like a basic plot to an all-too-tedious murder mystery, but Dan Brown cleverly weaves into the storyline elements of the entire Jesus legacy mythology and the codes which Langdon and granddaughter (conveniently a police cryptographer) tease out throughout the book. As it states in the introduction, the descriptions of artwork, architecture, secret rituals and organisations in this book are real.

The information in the book will be very old to any *FT* reader, as source material has been around since at least the release of the *Holy Blood*, *Holy Grail* books and, more recently, the *Templar Revelation*, but for a crash course which is also a ripping yarn, *The Da Vinci Code* is an excellent start and, in some ways, it is more interesting as a media virus infecting the US with hermetic mythology.

Mark Bennett