

The Lost Symbol Study Guide

The Lost Symbol by Dan Brown

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Plot Summary

NOTE: All citations in this Study Guide refer to the Kindle version of *The Lost Symbol*, by Dan Brown, published Sept. 15, 2009.

A man bent on becoming a deity of darkness attempted to reveal the secrets of the centuries old establishment of the Masons and block advancement in Noetic Science in the novel *The Lost Symbol*, by Dan Brown. Professor Robert Langdon believed he had been called to Washington by his best friend Peter Solomon to give a lecture. Instead, he found himself in the middle of a race with time to solve the mysteries of the Masonic Pyramid. He must decode the pyramid in order to save his friend and, possibly, the future of the nation from this mad man who wants to destroy knowledge and increase the power of darkness.

Langdon was surprised to receive a last minute phone call from the assistant of his friend, Peter Solomon, asking Langdon to give a lecture in the Capitol Building that evening. Instead of a packed lecture hall, Langdon arrived at the Capitol to find an empty room. As Langdon tried to determine what was happening, the severed hand of Peter appeared in the Rotunda of the Capitol Building. This hand was tattooed and arranged in the form of the Hand of Mysteries, an ancient symbol depicting an invitation. Before he knew what was happening, Langdon had been hijacked by the leader of the CIA's office of Security to help find and decode the Masonic Pyramid. The CIA had received a tip that Langdon was the only one who could decode the pyramid. Though he did not realize it, Langdon had been tricked by the stranger, Mal'akh, who had called him pretending to be Peter's assistant into bringing a box with him that Peter had left with Langdon for safekeeping. Langdon later learned this box contained the capstone of the pyramid, the piece needed to decode the engravings of the pyramid.

Meanwhile, the man named Mal'akh, who had kidnapped Peter, charmed Peter's sister Katherine into trusting him. Katherine, a Noetic Scientist, was making breakthroughs in the science of determining the power of the human mind. Because he believed he would be rewarded by the dark forces by destroying her work, Mal'akh blew up Katherine's lab. He attempted to kill her, but she was able to escape and join Langdon in his efforts to save Peter.

Because the CIA does not have saving Peter's life as its first priority, Katherine and Langdon are able to get away from the CIA with the help of William Bellemay, the Architect of the Capitol and a friend of Peter. They try to decode the pyramid as they out run the CIA. Just as they are caught, Langdon and Katherine make a call to Mal'akh's phone. They believe that Peter has been freed because they talk to a security guard who claims to be at the house. The CIA leader allowed them to go to Mal'akh's house. As it turned out, they had been tricked again by Mal'akh. Mal'akh took them hostage and killed the CIA agent who was sent with them. Langdon was put in a sensory deprivation chamber and forced to tell Mal'akh the location to which he believed the Masonic Pyramid was pointing him. Mal'akh took blood from Katherine, leaving her to



die. Then, he took Peter to the Temple Room of the House of the Temple. Mal'akh intended to sacrifice himself there.

In the Temple Room, Mal'akh demanded that Peter give him the Lost Word so he could write it on the top of his head, the only spot of his body that was not tattooed. Peter gave him a symbol to write there, and Mal'akh went on with his ritual believing that Peter had told him the truth. Just before Mal'akh told Peter that Peter was the one who would kill him, he also told Peter that he was Zachary, Peter's son. Peter had believed that Zachary was dead.

Peter was sorrowful, then angry. Instead of stabbing his son with the knife he was given, Peter jabbed the blade into the stone altar breaking its blade. Mal'akh died when a helicopter was brought over the skylight in the Temple Room in order to kill Mal'akh's laptop and keep a video Mal'akh had made of his own initiation into the Masons from becoming public. When the helicopter pilot tried to pull the copter away from the building its strut hit the skylight and broke it. Mal'akh was impaled by pieces of glass from the broken skylight. Instead of the joyous reception he expected when he died, Mal'akh went into a place of darkness and fear.

Because of his dedication to Peter, Peter showed Langdon at the end of the novel where the Ancient Mysteries, also known as the Lost Word, were buried. He explained that the Mysteries were actually a copy of the Bible buried in the capstone of the Washington Monument. The last image in the novel is that of Katherine and Langdon watching the sun rise over the Washington Monument, a sign that light always wins over darkness.



Prologue and Chapters 1-7

Summary

In the Prologue, a Masonic initiate to the thirty-third degree went through an initiation process. He was surrounded by wealthy and influential men. As he went through the ritual, the initiate continued to say to himself, "The secret is how to die" (4). As the Worshipful Master told the initiate it was time to take his vows, he thought about how he had lied about his intentions and his desire to be a Mason. The Masons had no idea why he wanted to become a member. When he first drank the wine, he felt his lung tighten and thought perhaps it was known he was lying but the feeling passed. As he looked at the master, he thought about that man that he would soon lose everything that he loved.

In Chapter 1, a boy with claustrophobia rode an elevator up the Eiffel Tower with his father. His father noticed that his son was struggling with his claustrophobia and mentioned he had thought the boy would have gotten over his fear by that point in his life. Because he did not want to disappoint his father, the boy tried to hide his fear. They heard a cracking noise, and the elevator fell.

Just as the elevator fell, Robert Langdon woke. He was riding in a corporate jet, reviewing notes for a speech about Masonic symbology. His mentor, Peter Solomon, had called him at the last moment asking him to give a lecture. When his plane arrived in Washington, Langdon was taken in a Town Car to the Capitol Building. It is noted at the end of the chapter that only one man was busy preparing for Langdon's arrival.

In Chapter 2, Mal'akh completed work on one of his tattoos. He was tattooing himself in order to make a declaration of transformation. The marks were a statement that he was in charge of his own body. He hoped to unveil the country's greatest secret, the secret known only by the Masons. This group "kept it hidden behind a veil of symbols, legends, and allegory" (13).

In his dressing room, Mal'akh admired his body, which was completely tattooed with the exception of a small circle of skin on the top of his head. Only one man had seen Mal'akh's tattoos. That man had said that Mal'akh was a demon. Before he went out, Mal'akh covered his tattoos with makeup.

In Chapter 3, Langdon thought about how quickly his trip to Washington had materialized. He had returned home from exercising that morning and discovered he had a voicemail from Solomon's assistant requesting that he call Solomon. When Langdon returned the call, Solomon was not able to talk directly, but Langdon agreed to allow the assistant to pass along a message. Solomon had hoped Langdon could speak at a gala planned that night for supporters of the Smithsonian.



In Chapter 4, Alfonso Nunez watched as a man with a limp and a sling approached the security checkpoint at the Capitol Building. Nunez followed protocol with the man even though he appeared to be handicapped. The metal detector alerted Nunez the man was wearing something metallic. The man said he was wearing a ring that he was unable to remove because his injured hand was so swollen. Nunez carefully inspected the man's hand and arm and came to the conclusion that the only thing he had was a ring. Though Nunez trusted his own intuition that there was nothing strange about the man, he did notice that the man appeared to be wearing makeup. As the man walked away from the checkpoint, he thought about how easy it had been to get the item he was hiding in the sling through security.

In Chapter 5, Katherine Solomon drove her Volvo to her lab, located within the Smithsonian Museum Support Center (SMSC). She was a scientist who studied in the field of Noetic Science, a discipline that sought to prove that the human mind was more powerful than anyone imagined. That night she was upset because she had heard disturbing news about her brother, Solomon. She took a phone call from a man named Mal'akh. He told her that what her brother believed was hidden in the United States Capitol was real, not just a legend.

In Chapter 6, Langdon was nervous going through the underground visitor's center that led into the Capitol Building. He suffered claustrophobia because of a childhood accident in which he had been trapped in a well overnight. The center was light and spacious enough that Langdon was comfortable. As he went through security, the guard commented on Langdon's Mickey Mouse watch. Langdon hurried toward the National Statuary Hall and thought about the legends associated with the Capitol Building. He was also aware that many people believed the Masons had secrets hidden throughout the Capitol city.

Langdon remembered a class session in which he had discussed the Masons with a group of students. They talked about the Masons and their connection to the United States. They discussed why the Masons were not considered a religion.

A striking clock pulled him out of his daydream. He saw the entrance to the National Statuary Hall. When he stepped inside, he was disturbed by what he saw.

In Chapter 7, as Katherine Solomon passed through security into the SMSC, the guard kidded her about what she was doing in her secret lab. As she took off her watch, a gift from her mother, she was reminded of her mother's violent death. The guard continued to ask about what she did. She said he would find out someday.

In this section, it is noteworthy that Langdon agreed to the speaking engagement without directly confirming with Peter that he was needed. Also, at the end of Chapter 1, it is indicated that only one man was busy preparing for Langdon's arrival.



Analysis

This novel opens in the past tense and is narrated by an omniscient third person narrator. Tones of suspense and danger are presented from the beginning of the story. The opening scene is one of a secret Masonic ritual performed with a skull and wine. The man taking the oath to become a Mason of the thirty-third degree is lying about his intentions as he enters the highest ranks of this brotherhood. He has no intention of being true to the group.

Immediately, the importance of the number 33 is apparent. Thirty-three is the highest rank that a Mason can reach. The throne in the temple room is also 33 feet tall. References to the number 33 will continue throughout the novel.

Even though the initiate obviously does not honor the secrets of the Masons, he pauses as he takes the oath. He had been told that if he were to betray the secrets of the Masons he would suffer instant death. He considered the “foreboding solemnity” (5) in the room and wondered for a moment if what the Masons had told him was true. The author adds to the suspense when he indicates the initiate felt a strange sensation in his lungs just after he had drunk the ceremonial wine. When it passed, he realized he was safe. This prelude ends with a threat made by the initiate, who turns out to be a man named Mal’akh, that Peter Solomon, the Worshipful Master, will soon lose everything he holds dear.

Mal’akh appears to have a God complex. He sees himself and his tattooed body as a masterpiece. He believes he is transforming himself into a higher species. He had allowed himself to be initiated into the Masons so he could know and reveal a secret he believes was held by this group. He is following some sort of ancient protocol to prepare himself for his complete transformation. This protocol includes fasting and covering himself with tattoos.

One can tell early on that there will be a conflict between good and evil. Mal’akh appears to be firmly on the side of evil as he tricks those around him into trusting him. One aspect of his personality that make Mal’akh extremely dangerous is that he is careful to cover the signs of his extremism. Even the guard at the Capitol Building who relies on his gut feeling to signal him if something is strange, does not get a bad feeling about Mal’akh. The only thing that he believes is odd about the man is that he appears to be wearing makeup. Mal’akh notes that the one man who did see his tattoos does recognize how disturbed Mal’akh is. That man told Mal’akh that he was a demon.

Even as Mal’akh promises to do even more harm to the Solomon family, there is a hint that the family has already had its share of tragedy. As Katherine looks at the watch her mother gave her as a gift she remembers “Almost ten years had now passed since her mother had died violently . . . passing away in Katherine’s arms” (43). Now, Mal’akh has gotten in touch with her about her brother, Solomon, telling her that the thing that he believes is a legend is real and can be located.



Through the course of the novel, the characters will learn that symbols can have multiple meanings. They will discuss the meanings of words and the way the meanings of some words have changed over the years. One such word that is discussed in this section is the word occult. During a lecture, a student in Langdon's class automatically assumed the word meant something associated with the devil. Langdon corrected him and explained how something occult had come to be viewed as something belonging to the devil. The word originally referred to something that was hidden or veiled. The idea that the occult was of the devil came from times of religious oppression when any thing or any belief that went against the thinking of the church had to be kept hidden, or occult. "The church felt threatened by this, they redefined anything 'occult' as evil" (33).

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the prologue of the novel in respect to these first few chapters. What does Mal'akh seem to be doing when he becomes a Mason?

Discussion Question 2

How do the long descriptions of Washington D.C. and the symbols found there advance the novel?

Discussion Question 3

How does the author set a foreboding and suspenseful tone in the opening of the novel?

Vocabulary

austere, obelisk, gnomon, meticulous, etymologically, ingenious, meticulously, utopian, semiotics, burgeoned, aversion, ephemeral, conjuring, feigned, auspicious, cabal, euphemism, gargantuan, codices



Chapters 8-17

Summary

In Chapter 8, the room in which Langdon had thought he was supposed to give his lecture was empty with the exception of a few tourists. Langdon called Peter's assistant, Andrew. The man whom he had believed was the assistant asked if Langdon had confirmed the time with Peter directly. Langdon had not spoken with Peter. Instead, he had trusted the assistant, which the assistant said was foolish of him. The man pretending to be Andrew told him that Peter was not aware that Langdon was even in Washington. The man's voice changed as he told Langdon he was in Washington because "I want you here" (45).

In Chapter 9, Langdon wanted to hang up on the man, who said he was offering him an invitation. When the man told Langdon he (the man) was the only one who could save Peter, he got Langdon's attention. Langdon learned that man had Peter in his custody in what he described as the Araf, or purgatory, a place the man preferred to call the in between. Langdon was frustrated when the man refused to tell him if Peter was dead or alive. The man suggested that Langdon knew about "ancient secrets" (47) that the man wanted to know about. The man explained to Langdon that there was a portal that he understood that Langdon had the power to unlock. Langdon was surprised because he did not know about any ancient portal. He was even more shocked when the man told him that Peter had said Langdon was the only man who could unlock the portal. The man indicated to Langdon that Peter would point the way to the portal, and then hung up the phone. Langdon stood shocked for a moment before he heard the sound of someone screaming from the Rotunda.

In Chapter 10, Langdon arrived at the Rotunda in time to see a small boy being comforted. Someone was telling a guard that an item had been left in the Rotunda by someone who pulled it out of his sling. Langdon at first thought the item was a mannequin hand but as he got closer he realized it was a severed human hand, Peter's hand. The hand had its index finger and thumb pointing toward the ceiling. Each fingertip had a tattoo on it. He recognized the hand as Peter's when he saw his friend's Masonic ring on the ring finger.

In Chapter 11, Katherine was worried because her brother, who was never late, was late to their weekly meeting. He was also not answering his phone. She was on edge because she had learned that he was keeping a secret from her. She did not know how to begin talking to him about this secret.

As she went about her work in her lab, she remembered how it had been Peter's idea for Katherine to use the empty space in Pod 5 as a lab to test out some of her theories. On her first trip to her lab, the pod that Peter had taken her to was completely dark and unheated. Her lab was in the far corner. As he stepped into the dark pod Solomon told his sister that she would be able to find her way. Years later she was able to find her



way easily. There was a guidance system that Solomon had let her discover on her own.

In Chapter 12, Trent Anderson was the police chief for the Capitol. He was preparing to watch the Redskins game when a technician let him know about what was happening in the Rotunda. Anderson quickly picked out the man in question and watched on the replay of the surveillance video as that man knelt, pretending to tie his shoe but instead leaving the hand on the rotunda floor. Anderson ordered the man be found and detained. Anderson headed for the hall through which the man appeared to have left. He saw a blond tourist and asked him if he had seen a bald man with a sling. The tourist was hesitant, but he pointed out the direction he thought the man had gone. Anderson called for his officers to gather at that area as the man in the blue blazer walked out of the building. The man, who turned out to be Mal'akh, smiled because it had been so easy to outwit the police.

In Chapter 13, in the Rotunda, Langdon edged closer to Peter's severed hand. There was a tattoo of a crown on the thumb and a star on the index finger. He recognized the tattoos as symbols generally found of the Hand of Mysteries. This hand served as a call to action, or an invitation. Even though Langdon told the guard he could tell him what the hand meant, the guard ordered him to step back.

In Chapter 14, Mal'akh drove toward Katherine's lab, the workspace that Peter had told him about the night before. Mal'akh believed that one of his purposes was to destroy the work Katherine was doing. He wanted to extinguish this new age of learning at its start.

In Chapter 15, Katherine entered her lab. Her research there was proving the idea that: "We have barely scratched the surface of our mental and spiritual capabilities" (67).

One of the things she had determined was that when the minds of millions of people thought the same thing, these thoughts could bring order out of chaos. Once she arrived at the lab she checked the research library for her brother. He was not there. He had been the one who had taught her that early mystics and scientists had studied the same theories that scientists of the modern age believed were new discoveries.

In Chapter 16, back in the Rotunda, Anderson studied the hand. A guard came to Anderson with a phone. He said it was a personal call from the CIA. It was, in fact, Inoue Sato the director of the CIA's office of security who was on the phone. Sato asked Anderson to put a man named Langdon, whom she had been told was in the building, on the phone. Anderson wondered if Sato knew about the hand.

Anderson listened in on Langdon's call. He winced when he heard Langdon make critical mistakes when dealing with the director, one of which was interrupting Sato, another was calling her a "sir" (80). Sato told Langdon the country was in the middle of a crisis but Langdon could think only of his concern for Peter. Anderson was shocked when he saw Sato walk into the Rotunda and up to Langdon, who had his back to her. Langdon was also shocked when the tiny Japanese woman, not a sir, tapped him on the shoulder. He apologized but it was clear that Sato was not placated.



In Chapter 17, Sato next questioned Anderson about the hand that had been found in the Rotunda. She informed him that the investigation was being taken over by the CIA because it was a matter of national security. Langdon spoke up and said that he could identify the hand as Peter Solomon's. Sato was intrigued when Langdon mentioned the tattoos on the tips of the fingers. She had Anderson use an ink pen to uncurl the other fingers and saw that they were also tattooed just as Langdon had thought they would be. Langdon was able to tell Sato what the hand and its tattoos meant. The information that he gave her made her more convinced than ever that he knew more about what was happening than he was telling her.

Analysis

The story line of the novel begins to develop in this section of the novel. Along with being a story that will depend heavily upon symbols and Langdon's ability to interpret them, the book is also a story of good versus evil. The reader has already got a pretty good idea that Mal'akh is either evil or a lunatic. He has not only lured Langdon to Washington under false pretenses, he has also planted the severed hand of Peter in the Rotunda of the Capitol. It is probably safe to assume that Mal'akh did the amputation himself. Once the reader understands that Mal'akh had Peter's hand hidden in his sling, it is easy to understand why he told the guard that asked about the tattoos that they hurt "Less than you might think" (25). The tattoos did not hurt Mal'akh at all because they were not done to his body.

It is a bit more difficult to determine which of the other characters are good or evil as they all appear to be working for their own cause. Because he is the main character and is brought into the situation with no prior knowledge, it can be assumed that Langdon will work as the hero in the novel. His main concern is the safety of his friend. He goes so far as to irritate the director of the CIA's office of security because he is so focused on Peter that he is not paying attention to her demands. It is when Anderson, the police chief at the Capitol and Sato get together that a power struggle ensues. Anderson learns about the hand when he is called to the Rotunda. Sato comes to Anderson and Langdon telling them there is a matter of national security that involves Langdon, yet she knew nothing about the hand. One must wonder what Sato does know and from where she got her information.

An important symbol introduced in this section is the symbol that Mal'akh made of Peter's hand. Langdon calls this hand the Hand of Mysteries. As he tells Sato, "the Hand of the Mysteries served as a mystical summons. Basically, it's an invitation to receive secret knowledge — protected wisdom known only to an elite few" (85).

Mal'akh makes one of many transformations in this section of the novel. He does so in this section to keep from getting caught as he left the Capitol building. In this stunt, with the help of a clever disguise, he enters the Capital looking like a disabled veteran and leaves it looking like a tourist. As Mal'akh continues to think about his ultimate transformation it is assumed that he thinks he will be able to transform himself into some sort of God or Godlike person.



In addition to Mal'akh's act of luring Langdon to the Capital, he also has plans to destroy work being done by Katherine Solomon, Peter's sister. She is working to prove how powerful the human mind can be. Mal'akh thinks her research could begin another period of renaissance in the world and believes it is his duty to destroy her work.

When Langdon and Mal'akh discuss Peter's status, Mal'akh gives confusing answers indicating Peter is between life and death. His inability to give Langdon a straight answer about Peter may seem to be a power play on his part but the reader will understand Mal'akh's strange references to Peter's state later in the novel.

A phrase used by Mal'akh in this section of the novel gives Langdon a sense of foreboding and increases the feeling of suspense. "As above, so below" (49) are the words that give Langdon a chill because he associates them with "an ancient Hermetic adage that proclaimed a belief in the physical connection between heaven and earth" (49).

This saying will appear in several places later in the course of the novel.

The idea that a legend might be more than a just legend is an idea both Langdon and Katherine struggle with in this novel. Langdon is faced with a man, Mal'akh, who believes that there really is an ancient portal in the city of Washington. Mal'akh tells Langdon that Peter has told him that Langdon is the only one who can unlock the portal, information that shocks Langdon. At the same time, Katherine is struggling with the same disbelief. Mal'akh had contacted her and told her: "That which your brother believes is hidden in D.C. . . . it can be found. Sometimes a legend that endures for centuries . . . endures for a reason" (74). Despite the longevity of the idea there is a secret portal in Washington, Katherine believes this legend is just a legend.

Although there are not a good deal of literary devices used in the writing of this novel, Brown does slip in a few. In this section, for instance, after Langdon is faced with Peter's severed hand, he "felt his mind go blank, like an untuned television set broadcasting only static" (62). This simile helps the reader understand how Langdon spaced out when he saw the hand.

One of the questions that seems to be posed in this book is asked by Katherine to Trish: What does one make of the ethical dilemma posed by the acquisition of knowledge? She refers to the ability of some people to abuse knowledge and advances in technology. Just as these advances can be advantageous, they can also be used to hurt others. Trish answers the way Katherine hopes she will be saying that knowledge is a tool, neither good nor bad in itself. It is the user who must be held accountable for what he does with the knowledge.

Discussion Question 1

Do you believe there is an ethical dilemma associated with the acquirement of knowledge? Why or why not?



Discussion Question 2

Why does Mal'akh seem to be so obsessed with transformation? In what ways has transformation helped him thus far?

Discussion Question 3

How does the author build suspense in the novel?

Vocabulary

oblivious, morphed, mellifluous, persuasive, canticle, semantics, adage, handequin, mottled, quantitative, emanating, paradigms, detain, converge, obeisance, coagulated, abhorrent, delusions, coalescing, piqued, synchronization, eclectic, esoteric, erudite, nomenclature, tersely, emaciated, acquiescence



Chapters 18-24

Summary

In Chapter 18, Katherine checked out her lab, including the back up drives, to make sure everything was working as it should. When she saw lights on in the control room she thought it was Peter but it turned out to be only Trish, Katherine's assistant. Katherine asked Trish to help her find historical proof that the legend she had been told by Mal'akh was true. Katherine gave Trish a list of keywords that Trish did not seem to think would appear together, especially not verbatim but she wrote the spider and activated the search any way.

In Chapter 19, Sato and Langdon discussed their priorities. Langdon wanted to help Peter while Sato's goal was to cooperate with the man who left the hand in the Rotunda. She would not let Langdon know who told her about the hand or how she was told but she did tell him that it concerned a matter a national security. Sato also noted that Mal'akh was committed to his cause. While Langdon did not believe Peter knew what he was talking about when he told the man he could unlock the portal, Sato was determined there was some basis in truth. Even though Langdon knew about the legend that there was a portal leading to Ancient Mysteries, he did not believe it existed. As Sato questioned him further about the longevity of the legends, Langdon admitted he was a skeptic. In fact, he believes that Peter was thinking about a metaphorical portal, not a physical one. Langdon did admit that the man was highly intelligent, particularly in the ancient ways because he had presented the Hand of Mysteries in a sacred place as dictated by ancient protocol.

The focus changes at this point to Trish as she prepared to launch the spider she had written for Katherine. She had little hope that the search would turn anything up based on the search words that Katherine had given her.

In Chapter 20, Sato asked Langdon for more information about the connection between the Capitol's Rotunda and the Ancient Mysteries. He told her that the Rotunda, as well as many other political buildings in the United States Capitol, had been copied from buildings in Greece. The Rotunda in particular was modeled after the Temple of Vesta. A large torch had once burned below the Rotunda floor, visible to visitors through a hole in the floor where Peter's hand had been left. He pointed out the apotheosis — the transformation of man into God — could be seen in the mural on the ceiling of the Rotunda, a painting that illustrated George Washington being turned into a God.

In Chapter 21, Langdon could sense Sato and Anderson were confused while he described the meaning of the painting above them. The painting not only showed George Washington turning into a God, it also showed the ancient gods and goddesses presenting the leaders of America with knowledge.



Because the man had told Langdon that Peter would point the way, Sato believed the answer to finding the portal might lie somewhere in the painting. She thought the pointing finger was pointing in the direction they must go while Langdon said the hand was not pointing at all but instead arranged in a symbol of the phrase “As above, so below” (109) indicating a mortal’s connection to God.

Meanwhile Sato checked in with her staff, who confirmed everything Langdon had told her so far. She pushed him for more information about the strange circumstances. As Langdon went through all he knew of the hand and what it symbolized, it came to him that additional information might be tattooed on Peter’s palm. Sato used an ink pen to pry open the fingers and determined that Langdon was right.

In Chapter 22, Katherine thought back over her earlier meeting with the man who claimed Peter was keeping secrets from her. He had introduced himself as Dr. Christopher Abaddon. He indicated to Katherine that she was listed as an emergency contact on her brother’s medical files. He was concerned because Peter had not shown up for his appointment that morning. The man claimed Peter had said he had told Katherine about his doctor visits. She insisted on visiting the doctor in his office to find out what was wrong with her brother.

She was confused when she arrived at the man’s mansion in Kalorama Heights. Her first impression of the man was that he was wearing makeup. Katherine was uncomfortable and Dr. Abaddon told her he knew she was nervous because he was a psychiatrist and was trained to spot those emotions in people. Katherine was more at ease when she saw Abaddon’s certificate proving he was a Mason of the highest degree, just like her brother. She was at first offended when Abaddon told Katherine that Peter had spoken to him about the possible psychological impacts of the work she was doing. She was also surprised because Peter was the one who had stressed they not tell anyone about what she was doing.

The doctor also told Katherine he had finally asked Peter about a deep sense of guilt he sensed in Peter. Peter had told him about their mother’s death. While Katherine said that the demands the man had made when he broke into their house had not made sense to them, the doctor suggested that these demands had made sense to Peter. Peter believed that if he had given the object to the man that he asked, his mother might still be alive. Dr. Abaddon believed Peter was suffering with a break from reality because he had also been talking about something he possessed that made him the protector of ancient wisdom.

In Chapter 23, Langdon looked at the tattoo on Peter’s hand but did not understand it. Sato suggested the characters might be written in some Masonic language, which sparked a discussion of whether or not Masons were trustworthy, especially since they kept so many secrets. She suggested Langdon be taken to CIA headquarters and interrogated. As Langdon took one final look at the ring on Peter’s hand, he got an idea about why he had been called there.



Meanwhile, Katherine attempted to call Peter's cell phone, which Mal'akh had in his possession. He was pleased to learn that all of her information was located in her lab. He intended to destroy what she was working on because he wanted the world to remain "adrift in ignorant darkness" (127). When Mal'akh pulled up to the SMSC he saw that it was secured building surrounded by razor wire. He also knew how easy it was going to be for him to get inside.

In Chapter 24, Langdon remembered a morning year ago when Peter had met Langdon at the college where he taught to give him something that was of great value for safe keeping. Peter told Langdon he no longer felt comfortable with the item in his own home. It was a small box sealed in wax with a Masonic ring. Peter said the package had been sealed by his great-grandfather. He believed the box would be safest outside the Masonic brotherhood. Langdon had indicated he did not want to be a member because it would prevent him from talking about Masonic symbols during his classes. Peter would tell him only that the box contained a talisman that would be dangerous in the wrong hands.

Back in the Capitol Rotunda, Langdon had suddenly remembered that he had been told that Peter requested he bring that package with him to Washington. That package was in Langdon's day bag.

Analysis

As the novel progresses, the question of knowledge being good or evil is dealt with more specifically. In Mal'akh's case, he believes that knowledge is dangerous and evil. When he considers the work that Katherine is doing in her research lab, he thinks about how future generations might be impacted by her findings. He believes that he has been sent to destroy the proof of the things that she has discovered, leaving modern man ignorant of the possible powers they possess. He attempts to instill doubt in Katherine when he talks to her about the discussions he says that he and Peter have had about the impacts of her research. "The questions we discuss are challenging ones: What happens to the human condition if the great mysteries of life are finally revealed? What happens when those beliefs that we accept on faith . . . are suddenly categorically proven as fact? Or disproved as myth? One could argue that there exist certain questions that are best left unanswered" (119). Mal'akh presents his questions to Katherine as if he has a true concern for humans and their ability to deal with the findings of her research. The reader knows that Mal'akh's concern, makeup, wig, and gentleman's clothes are a cover for his real desires.

As Langdon tries to determine Sato's role in Peter's disappearance, he struggles with his ability to trust her. He is not quite sure if she is on his side or not. Since she will not give him any information about how she came to even know he was at the Capitol, he is not sure if she is on the side of the man who hurt Peter or if she wants to help Peter. It is clear that she does not trust Langdon and believes that he is hiding something from her. While Sato and Langdon struggle with their distrust of one another, Mal'akh quickly earns the trust of those from whom he needs help. In his interaction with Katherine,



Katherine is on high alert in his home and believes that he has ill intentions when she first enters his house. Because he is such a charismatic individual, Mal'akh is able to quickly win Katherine's complete trust. Remember how he was also able to manipulate Langdon into coming to Washington on such short notice without even talking to Peter. In this section the reader discovers that Langdon even brought an important package that Peter gave to him for safekeeping to Washington without questioning Peter directly if that was what he wanted to happen.

In addition to being charming, Mal'akh is also intelligent, a combination that works in his favor. Although Langdon declares Mal'akh a lunatic, Sato disagrees with him: "If I may point this out . . . your lunatic deftly manipulated two fairly smart individuals already this morning ... In my business, one learns there is a fine line between insanity and genius. We would be wise to give this man a little respect" (96). When Langdon points out to Sato that this man was crazy enough that he cut off Peter's hand from which to make an ancient symbol Sato tells him that this action only indicates how committed the man is to following through with his plan.

When Langdon introduces the idea of the legend of the Ancient Mysteries, it is clear that he and Sato disagree on whether or not the legends are based in reality. In fact, Langdon is surprised how seriously and how literally Sato takes the story of the Ancient Mysteries that are believed to be hidden behind a locked portal. She also believes Peter's hand is literally pointing the way to this locked portal. Langdon tells her the Ancient Mysteries and the portal are allegorical, that they do not really exist. He also explains the hand is not literally pointing in the direction they should look for the portal. Sato argues in favor of the legend having a basis in reality because the legend is so long lived. Langdon, meanwhile, points out to her that there are other legends that are long-lived and widespread but do not actually have in basis in reality. He uses the Fountain of Youth and Shangri-la as examples.

When Langdon begins discussing the belief of the founders of America in mystics and Greek gods, Sato suggests that what he is telling her does not fit with the idea that America was founded on Christian principles. "Secret wisdom,' Sato said with more than a hint of sarcasm in her voice. 'Knowledge that lets men acquire godlike powers?' / 'Yes, ma'am.' / 'That hardly fits with the Christian underpinnings of this country.'"

(105) She is particularly shocked by the way the painting on the ceiling of the Rotunda depicts George Washington being transformed into a God. A bit of information that Langdon does not share with her is that the Washington Monument, an Egyptian obelisk, is a tribute to the ancients as this symbol was found in many of the great classical cities.

Important symbols introduced in this section include the painting of the Apotheosis of Washington. This painting is a symbol of the belief of the founding fathers of America that knowledge could give people god-like powers. Notice also in his description of the painting, Langdon breaks the word down into its Greek roots. The prefix "apo" means to become while the root "theosis" means God. An apotheosis refers to a transformation to the divine. Langdon continues to discuss the Hand of Mysteries, which was introduced



in a previous section. He indicates this is an invitation to seek wisdom but that it is usually followed up by further information, information that he believes is lacking in this case until he discovers the tattoo on the palm of Peter's hand.

Peter's Masonic ring is also an important symbol. It is a symbol not only of Peter but also of his family's tradition with the Masons. In this section the reader learns that the ring that Peter wore belonged to his great-grandfather, the man who sealed the package given to Langdon for safekeeping. The double-headed phoenix is a symbol that appears on this ring. Langdon indicates it is "the ultimate mystical icon of Masonic wisdom" (125).

Katherine is able to recognize that the man who identifies himself as Dr. Abaddon is a Mason because she sees a certificate with this symbol on it. Remember that this same man, who is in reality Mal'akh — his identity is given away by the fact he wears makeup to cover up his tattoos — has this same double-headed phoenix tattooed on his chest.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the idea that the founding fathers of the United States believed they could use knowledge to transform themselves into God. Do you agree with Sato that this idea is anti-Christian? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Why is Mal'akh, disguised as Dr. Abaddon, able to win Katherine's confidence so quickly? What aspects of his personality make him easy to believe?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the package that Peter gave to Langdon. Why does Langdon believe he has failed Peter by bringing it along with him?

Vocabulary

paramount, emanating, corroborated, verbatim, menial, arcane, abstruse, convergence, hypothetical, sadistic, duress, demigod, venerated, perilous, opulent, rectilinear, runic, maligned, impasse, aquiline, propensity, talisman, vogue, axioms



Chapters 25-32

Summary

In Chapter 25, Trish was surprised when she began to receive hits from her spider search. One in particular seemed significant because the document contained all of the search phrases that Katherine had given Trish. The only problem was that the document was highly redacted, indicating the owner of the page wanted them to purchase it from him. Trish cannot even determine the source of the page even when she ran a trace on it. Trish suggested they hire a hacker to try to find out from where the document came and get the full page. As Trish was on her way to contact a man she knew who was a hacker, Katherine got a text message on her phone from Peter.

As Mal'akh waited outside the SMSC he noticed the sign on a church displaying the members' belief that Jesus was born of a virgin and was both man and God. Mal'akh thought to himself that type of birth was not the only way to reach divinity. Meanwhile, his cell phone rang. It was Katherine telling him that she had finally heard from Peter. He had sent her a text message saying he was on his way to her lab. The message indicated Peter wanted Dr. Abaddon to meet them at the lab. After the call was complete, Mal'akh pulled out Peter's cell phone and looked at the text that he sent to Katherine. He put Peter's cell phone under his car's tire and destroyed it. As he waited for the proper time to go into the SMSC he thought about his plan to kill Katherine and destroy all of her research.

In Chapter 26, Langdon wondered if Sato knew about and wanted the box that Peter had given to him years ago. He tried to cover his sudden paleness by acting as if he had a new idea about the hand. He turned the hand upside down and read out the letters and Roman numeral he discovered — SBBXIII. Anderson recognized the abbreviation SBB. Sato asked to speak to him about the meaning of the abbreviation in private. Sato first verified that Anderson knew where SBBXIII was located and then ordered him to take them to that location and open it for them. While they were still in private, Sato asked Anderson if she could get a copy of the x-ray of Langdon's bag. Before they left the Rotunda to go to the location indicated on Peter's hand, Sato ordered Langdon to follow them.

In Chapter 27, Trish contacted her friend Mark Zoubianis and asked him to work on locating the source of the document. He agreed to do so even though the IP address she gave him made him uncomfortable because it appeared to be either military or government intelligence.

In Chapter 28, Langdon wondered where he was being taken as Anderson led him and Sato through the Capitol Crypt below the Rotunda, and then wound their way through a maze of hallways and tunnels. When Langdon asked where they were going, Anderson began explaining how SBB13 was a private storage area but Sato cut him short. Their



route took them through a steel door and down another level. Langdon's feelings of claustrophobia kicked into high gear the lower they went.

In Chapter 29, Mal'akh, dressed as a chauffeur, arrived at the gates of the SMSC. He spoke with the guard, who was more interested in the Redskins' game, and showed the ID belonging to Abaddon. He was waved through quickly. Mal'akh was again surprised how easy it was to get through security and remembered how easy it was to get through the security at Peter's house the night before. He had pretended to be Dr. Abaddon's chauffeur at the gate. Then, in the parking garage, he had changed clothes. Once inside Peter's apartment, Mal'akh, remembered the sight of Peter pointing a gun at him years ago as the two shook hands. Mal'akh also thought about his initiation into the thirty-third degree of the Masons and the power he believed it gave him over them.

Mal'akh told Peter that they had actually met years prior. Peter asked to be reminded of their meeting. Instead of saying anything, Mal'akh pulled out a stun gun and shot Peter. When Peter could finally speak again, he asked Mal'akh if he wanted money. Mal'akh told Peter that he wanted the secret information that Peter knew. When Peter told Mal'akh he had no idea what he was talking about, Mal'akh reminded him those were the same words he had said on the night that Peter's mother had died. Peter realized the man in his house was the same one who killed his mother. Mal'akh reminded Peter that he had told him on that day that if he pulled the trigger of the gun he was aiming at Mal'akh, he would haunt him forever. Mal'akh stunned Peter again before he had a chance to respond.

In Chapter 30, as they continued downward, Sato asked Langdon to talk to her about the symbols on Peter's Masonic ring. She was especially interested in the idea that some secret might be passed on to the Masons who were initiated into the thirty-third degree. She also noted that her contacts were finding references to a pyramid when they researched Masons and the thirty-third degree. When he does not mention it, Sato asked Langdon directly about the Masonic Pyramid, a story that Langdon dismissed as a myth. She pressed him for the story and he told her, in short, that it was believed the Masons had built a hidden pyramid in America to keep the Ancient Mysteries safe from religious persecution and protect them for future generations. Sato pointed out to him the parallel between the Pyramid and the portal that the man who had left Peter's hand seemed determined to find. Even though Langdon insisted there was no connection Sato told him the parallel was too obvious to ignore.

In Chapter 31, Trish left Katherine's lab. She had volunteered to bring Dr. Abaddon back for Katherine. She remembered the first time she had to walk to the lab in total darkness. Katherine had showed her the carpet runner that led from the door of the pod to the door of the lab, installed as a guidance system to help people reach the lab in the dark. Back in the lab, after Trish had left, Katherine continued to study the redacted document on the plasma wall of the control room.

In Chapter 32, Langdon and his group reached a metal door that separated the Senate Basement (SB) from the House Basement (HB). They learned that the particular room in which they were headed toward had been set aside for Peter Solomon's private use.



The guard who brought them the key to the SBB also told them they could not locate a key for room 13. Anderson unlocked the door labeled SBB to reveal another set of stairs.

Analysis

Some information shared in this section is significant because of its tie to the past. Other information is important because it foreshadows coming events. The reader learns about Mal'akh earning his promotion to the thirty-third degree of the Masons by making a large financial donation to the Masons. It is odd that Mal'akh is not surprised that he learned no secrets when he was initiated into this highest rank of the Masons. He indicates that something happened at his initiation that had never happened at a Mason initiation before. It gave him what he needed to have power over the Masons. Because the reader knows that Mal'akh lied when he took the oath, he may think that because he was not instantly struck down the Masons and their rituals hold no power over him. In reality, Mal'akh is foreshadowing a discovery that will be shared later on in the novel.

From this section the reader understands that Mal'akh must have climbed through the ranks of the Masons as Dr. Abaddon. What leads the reader to believe this is that Peter knows Mal'akh as Dr. Abaddon and trusts him enough to let the man into his private home. Once he is inside Peter's house Mal'akh reveals another of his identities. He is the man who broke into the Solomon house years before and demanded a piece of information from Peter that Peter refused to give him. During the confrontation, Peter's mother was shot. It is to this incident that Mal'akh had referred when he told Katherine about Peter's guilt. He insinuated that Peter felt guilty because he believed that if he had given the man what he wanted, his mother would still be alive. It may be further inferred by the reader that the item that Peter gave to Langdon in the square package, the one in Langdon's day bag, is the one that the robber wanted from Peter all those years ago.

The importance of the thirty-third level of the Masons is also stressed in this section of the novel. Mal'akh had heard for years of the Masons, "All is revealed at the thirty-third degree" (157). He is not surprised when he is not shown any secrets, even when he reaches the thirty-third degree level. Sato also questions this same quote when she sees it inscribed on Peter's Masonic ring. Langdon explained to Sato this level of the Masons could be joined by invitation only while all other levels could be attained by anyone who did the proper work.

Research of the words "thirty-third degree" and "portal" led Sato to question Langdon about the Masonic Pyramid. Again, Langdon tried to convince Sato the idea of a pyramid was just a legend even though Sato believed this pyramid might be what the man was looking for. Even though Sato presses him that the pyramid might be real he insisted that it was not. When asked to defend his position: "Langdon shrugged. 'Because it has no basis in fact. Like I said, it's a myth. One of many associated with the Masons.' / 'And yet this particular myth relates directly to the Ancient Mysteries?'" Sato



asked Langdon in return. It appears the legend indicates the Ancient Mysteries that the man is looking for are said to be hidden in this pyramid by the Masons in order to keep them safe for future generations. “Langdon had always struggled intellectually with the idea of the Ancient Mysteries and their potent promise of apotheosis” (161).

This struggle that Langdon faces when it comes to the Ancient Mysteries tells the reader that he not only doubts the legends about the whereabouts of these Mysteries, he additionally doubts that they exist at all.

There continue to be hints dropped that the knowledge contained in the Ancient Mysteries could be dangerous. For instance, it is noted that Isaac Newton said the Mysteries could not be revealed “without immense damage to the world” (161). It is later noted that the Masons had hid the knowledge because they believed “if this secret knowledge were to fall into uninitiated hands, the results could be devastating; as we said earlier, powerful tools can be used either for good or for evil” (165).

Again, the question is raised, is it right to keep knowledge out of the hands of people who might do good with it just because some might do bad? Consider also that Mal’akh is one who is seeking the Ancient Mysteries. He almost undoubtedly seems like one who would do bad with them if he got them.

An important symbol introduced in this section of the novel is the Masonic pyramid. It is believed that the Masons built a pyramid in the new world (America) in order to keep the Ancient Mysteries secret and protected. Langdon tells Sato the legend about the Masonic Pyramid being capped with solid gold to represent the value of the secret it hid. In general, Langdon tells Sato the pyramids are symbols of the humans’ desire to educate themselves and grow closer to god. The Ancient Mysteries were believed to be important in their education because it was through these mysteries that one could become god-like.

Discussion Question 1

What does it say about Mal’akh that he is the one who broke into the Solomon house years prior and tried to steal the pyramid from Peter? Why does he think he will be more successful in his second attempt at getting the piece?

Discussion Question 2

What do you think happened during Mal’akh’s initiation that makes him feel the Masons no longer have any power over him?

Discussion Question 3

How is the pyramid associated with the Ancient Mysteries? Why does Langdon believe such a pyramid does not really exist?

Vocabulary

redaction, symbolon, reprieve, begotten, feigned, untraceable, imploding, obliterate, eidetic, ineptitude, catafalque, entourage, convoluted, veritable, purist, contorted, reciprocal, enigmatically, echelon, allegedly, tyranny, homogenized



Chapters 33-43

Summary

In Chapter 33, as Mark tried to crack the IP address that Trish had given him, he received a phone call. It was from the CIA asking why he was trying to hack into one of their databases.

Meanwhile, in the Capitol's visitor center Nunez wondered if he would be allowed to keep his job since he had let the man in who had left the severed hand in the Capitol Rotunda. A pounding on the doors startled Nunez. Even though it was past closing time, Nunez let the man in when he recognized him as Warren Bellamy, the Architect of the Capitol Building. When Bellamy learned that the CIA was working with Anderson, he headed down to the lower levels of the Capitol to meet them. Although Nunez offered to let Anderson know that Bellamy was coming, Bellamy requested that he not do so, preferring to arrive unannounced.

In Chapter 34, Mal'akh was surprised when he met Katherine's assistant. Trish noticed disappointment in his eyes and wondered if the man had romantic feelings toward Katherine and wanted to be alone with her. She made a point to tell the guard that Peter would be arriving soon as a way to remind the man that he would not have had Katherine to himself even if Trish had not been there. As they walked toward Pod Five, Mal'akh spotted Pod Three, the wet pod, and pretended to be amazed by the giant squid carcass he could see. Trish stopped and let him into the pod. In reality, Mal'akh had tricked Trish with the hopes to be able to find a place there that he could take care of Trish out of view of the cameras that she told him recorded the hallways all of the time.

In Chapter 35, Langdon grew more panicked as he went down the steps into the Capitol's subbasement. When they reached the space with thirteen small storage rooms there was no electricity. Anderson noted it looked as if the rooms had been abandoned. The door to SBB13 was the only one that was closed and locked. Sato insisted that Anderson shoot out the lock. When Langdon asked her to wait and Andersons hesitated, she grabbed his gun and shot the lock herself. When the door was open, Langdon first noticed a strange odor coming through the open door. As Anderson shone his light in they saw something staring back at them.

In Chapter 36, on top of a wooden desk at the back of the room there was a wooden desk on which a human skull was placed. Also sitting on the desk were an hourglass, a crystal flask, and a piece of paper. Langdon recognized the arrangement and knew the smell was coming from a saucer of sulfur power also sitting with the items.

Above them, Nunez and Bellamy heard the gunshots. Nunez noticed to door to the subbasement was open and offered to radio for help. Bellamy told the young guard he would go the rest of the way alone.



In Chapter 37, as Trish talked about the specimens in the wet pod, Mal'akh was keeping an eye out for security cameras. He saw only one that was pointed toward the entrance. As Trish talked about the giant squid she felt a chill that she tried to ignore. She ended her speech quickly and turned to leave but Mal'akh put his hand over her mouth. He jerked her key card from around her neck and then demanded her PIN. She squirmed and scratched at his face. She did not break the skin but only scraped off a layer of makeup which she saw hid tattoos. When she did not give him her number he lifted her over the squid tank. The fumes from the ethanol burned her eyes. He continued pushing her down until her hair was in the ethanol. She relented and gave him her PIN. Instead of letting her go, he shoved her head under the ethanol until she drowned. When Mal'akh looked at her he thought briefly of Isabel Solomon but quickly cleared his mind. He shoved her entire body into the tank. He was glad to have gotten Trish's identity card. He would not have to try to get Katherine's card and her PIN from her.

In Chapter 38, Langdon told Sato that the room they had entered was a Chamber of Reflection. It was a place where a Mason would go to reflect on his own mortality. He described the meaning of the objects on the desk when Sato asked about them. Langdon pronounced there was nothing to see there but Anderson wanted to know what it was doing in the Capitol building. The battery in Anderson's flashlight was growing dim and Sato grew impatient so she lit the candle on the desk. Its light illuminated the back wall of the room. There seemed to be a draft that caused the candle to flicker. Langdon was intrigued by a shimmer he saw on the back wall. Langdon touched the wall and determined it was not a wall but instead a canvas. When he pulled the canvas away Sato spoke first saying that it appeared they had found their pyramid.

In Chapter 39, in a niche hidden by the canvas was a small pyramid, about nine inches tall. Sato noticed Langdon's surprise at finding the pyramid there. Although Sato suggested that Langdon should think again about his disbelief in the pyramid legend, Langdon insinuated that pyramid was nothing like the one from the Masonic legend. It was actually not even a whole pyramid but instead an Unfinished Pyramid, a symbol that man should always be working to achieve his full potential.

Sato asked that the pyramid be lifted down. She then examined it all over with her hands. She asked Langdon about the man's idea that the pyramid would contain some sort of powerful information. Langdon agreed but said that if the man did find the code he probably would not be able to read it. She smiled as she rotated the pyramid and showed him the fourth side.

In Chapter 40, Katherine felt uneasy because Trish was taking so long in getting back to her lab. She called the front guard and learned her brother was not on his way either. She felt a twinge of concern but decided there was nothing to be worried about.

In Chapter 41, Langdon looked at sixteen characters carved into the stone pyramid. She asked him if he could read the code. Before he answered she got a call on her Blackberry. She gave Langdon a strange look and asked Anderson if she could talk to him in the hallway. She showed him the x-ray of Langdon's bag in which there was an unusual object that showed up clearly.



Langdon was still investigating the pyramid when Sato and Anderson came back into the room. She showed him the x-ray photo of his bag. He noticed the most clear item in the bag was a small, pointed pyramid. Langdon claimed to know nothing of the pyramid but even as he spoke he realized it must be the item in the box that Peter gave him. It was the piece, the capstone, that would transform the Unfinished Pyramid into a full pyramid. Peter had been telling the truth when he said that Langdon was the only one who could unlock the mysteries of the pyramid. He also understood why Peter had called it a talisman. Sato warned Langdon that he had made some bad choices. When Langdon told Sato he could explain, Sato detained him. Anderson put the pyramid in Langdon's bag as Sato directed and she aimed Anderson's gun at Langdon.

A man suddenly ran into the small room and tackled Anderson causing him to hit his head on the stone. Even though Sato aimed the gun at the stranger, he grabbed one of the femur bones from the table and hit Sato in the shoulder with the bone. He ordered Langdon to get the pyramid and follow him.

In Chapter 42, Langdon, who had never met the African American man before sensed he was someone with power because he knew his way out of the subbasement. Langdon felt in his gut that he could trust the man especially since he wore a Masonic ring with the insignia of the thirty-third degree. When they reached the visitor's center Nunez was there. The man told Nunez to follow them and he obeyed. He directed Langdon and Nunez to a set of double doors that were sealed off with masking tape he gave Nunez directions to check on Anderson, and then to lock the doors behind them. He additionally told Nunez to tell no one that he had seen them. Once they were walking down the hallway behind the locked doors the man told Langdon that he was Warren Bellamy. He told Langdon he already knew that Peter was in danger.

Meanwhile, Mal'akh was making his way toward Pod 5. He had gotten a message from the Capitol stating that Langdon had the Pyramid and the Capstone. He was pleased that thing were falling into place so well.

In Chapter 43, as Bellamy and Langdon were hurrying down the hallway Langdon got a phone call from Mal'akh. When Langdon asked about Peter, Mal'akh said that Peter would live if Langdon did as he asked. He insisted that Langdon translate the symbols on the side of the pyramid. Langdon finally understood that Mal'akh believed that the pyramid would work as a map to lead him to the Ancient Mysteries.

Analysis

The turnabout of events in this section leaves the reader unsure who is trustworthy and who is not. Sato and Anderson have turned decisively against Langdon when they discover through their viewing of an x-ray that he has had the capstone of the pyramid with him the whole time. At the last moment, one of Peter's Masonic brothers snatches Langdon and the parts of the pyramid from Sato and Anderson. Langdon has a gut feeling that he can trust Bellamy even though he is not sure at first who the man even is. Even though Langdon is saved from Sato's threat to imprison him, there appears to



be a person at the Capitol who is feeding information to Mal'akh. As Mal'akh is headed toward Katherine's lab, he gets word from his contact at the Capitol that Langdon had both the pyramid and the capstone. The only people who knew that Langdon had both of these pieces were Anderson, Sato and Bellamy.

The symbols of death that Langdon, Sato and Anderson find in Peter's private room in the Capitol's subbasement are disturbing to both Sato and Anderson even though Langdon believes there is nothing unusual about those symbols. He tells Sato that the closet, like the one that Peter had created, were intended for Mason's to ponder his own mortality. Langdon suggested that Peter might have set up the chamber for lawmakers who were Masons to think through things before they voted on serious issues. "Lovely sentiment,' Sato said, her tone sarcastic, 'but I have a feeling Americans might have a problem with their leaders praying in closets with scythes and skulls.'" (199) This comment by Sato actually has a good deal of truth and will later be significant in Mal'akh's threat. Although Sato believes people will find the things in the room disturbing Langdon points out they are no more disturbing than "Christians praying at the feet of a man nailed to a cross" (197). Langdon indicates that: "Misunderstanding a culture's symbols is a common root of prejudice" (197-198).

Meanwhile the reader witnesses Mal'akh's murder of Trish. His act of killing this innocent woman shows how merciless he is and how he will stop at nothing to get what he wants. He is also able to think on his feet as he makes it appear as if he wants to examine a giant squid more closely when he really wants a place away from the cameras to kill Trish. Notice that Trish gets the same uneasy feeling that Katherine had gotten about Mal'akh just before he killed her. She tried to act on her gut feeling and get away but Mal'akh was too quick for her.

When it comes to the legend of the Masonic Pyramid, Langdon admits that he is a skeptic. He believes there is no real pyramid and that the story is merely allegorical. When Mal'akh speaks to him on the phone, however, Mal'akh insists the legend is real. "Mr. Langdon, the Masonic Pyramid was constructed to preserve the Ancient Mysteries, but with a twist you've apparently not yet grasped. Did Peter never tell you? The power of the Masonic Pyramid is not that it reveals the mysteries themselves . . . but rather that it reveals the secret location where the mysteries are buried" (219). When a small pyramid is found in the subbasement room set aside for Peter's use, Sato calls into question Langdon's insistence that the legend of the pyramid is just a legend. "Then perhaps you would like to reassess your previous claims regarding the legend of a Masonic Pyramid hidden in Washington?" (203) the lady asks when they discover what appears to be a pyramid in Peter's Meditation Chamber.

Just as Langdon has wondered on what side the CIA was working in reference to the pyramid and Peter's kidnapping, Sato and Anderson have reason to doubt Langdon's honesty when they discover through an x-ray the capstone of the pyramid among the contents of his bag. Sato uses this discovery as proof that Langdon had been lying to them all along. Langdon is spared having to try to explain why he did not know the capstone was there when Bellamy rescued him from both Sato and Anderson.



Langdon felt overwhelmed and confused as he hurried with Bellamy out of the Capitol Building. Notice the author's play on words in the following quote. "He didn't know what to believe anymore, but the stone pyramid in his bag seemed to be getting heavier with every passing moment" (220).

The stone pyramid was getting heavier in regards to weight but Langdon also felt a different kind of heaviness about the pyramid. Heavy in a sense can also mean something very serious or important. As Langdon thought more and more about the fact there had been a physical pyramid found, the fact he had it become more and more sobering to him.

Discussion Question 1

What does it mean that Langdon, Sato and Anderson find an actual pyramid in the subbasement of the Capitol Building? What does this say about the legend and Langdon's refusal to believe that legend?

Discussion Question 2

Why do you think the CIA is involved in this situation involving a Masonic Pyramid? Why is it significant that there is a document on the CIA's website that has on it all of the search phrases Katherine entered about the pyramid?

Discussion Question 3

Why is it significant that Langdon has the capstone to the pyramid in his daybag? Do you think he would have been able to explain himself if Bellamy had not rescued him from Sato?

Vocabulary

lithe, affably, genial, synopsis, abutted, verdigris, phalanx, impeded, pulverized, fetid, amorphous, visceral, flaccid, refracted, hypothetically, trepidation, askew, truncated, apex, utilitarian, accentuate, condescending



Chapters 44-52

Summary

In Chapter 44, Langdon called Jonas Faulkman, his publisher, for Katherine's cell phone number.

In Chapter 45, Langdon next called Katherine to tell her that Peter had been kidnapped. He explained to her that the text message she had received had not come from Peter but instead from the same man who had tricked Langdon into coming to Washington. At first, Katherine thought Langdon was crazy, even though she did not think he would joke about anything as serious as what they were discussing. When Langdon discovered that Abaddon was on his way to her lab, her ordered her to get out of the building.

Katherine contacted Kyle, the guard, who replayed the video footage. She noticed that Trish did not come out of Wet Pod with the doctor. Kyle saw the man's sleeves were wet up to his elbows and that he was holding Trish's key card. On the phone he told Katherine he thought they had a serious problem. Katherine was running through Pod 5 to the door as she waited for Kyle to tell her the whereabouts of Dr. Abaddon. He finally told her that the man had entered Pod 5 about ninety seconds ago. Before she hung up the phone, keeping its light from giving away her location, Katherine asked Kyle to send help. When she began smelling ethanol Katherine stepped off the carpet. The man lunged at her and caught hold of her lab coat but Katherine slipped out of it and got away.

In Chapter 46, Langdon and Bellamy finally reached the end of the tunnel that led from the Capitol to the Library of Congress. Bellamy led Langdon to the reading room, claiming it would be a safe place though Langdon thought otherwise. Bellamy told him that if they were found in the building that Langdon would be glad he chose this particular room. Langdon unzipped his day bag on one of the desks, revealing the pyramid. He told Bellamy he did recognize the symbols on the side of the pyramid. They were written in the Freemason's Cipher. The code was easy to break. This made Langdon wonder why everyone thought that he was the only one who could decipher the code and why it was such a matter of national security. After Bellamy learned that Sato had not told Langdon why she was interested in the pyramid, he wondered if she thought the information it protected was dangerous in some way.

In Chapter 47, Katherine continued to make her way through the darkness. Off the carpet runner she had no idea where she was going but she had stopped smelling the ethanol. She decided to stay still. She would know if Abaddon got close because she would smell the ethanol. As she was thinking about what to do if her cell phone rang she smelled the ethanol again. Her clothes rustled as she moved and the man lunged at her. She ran, running straight into the wall. Katherine smelled ethanol on either side of her along the wall because the doctor had thrown his shirt to her right and his jacket to her



left. He knew no one would be entering the pod to provide help because he had jammed to key card access with a dime.

He saw a glow from Katherine's cell phone and grasped where he thought Katherine should be. Instead of grabbing her, he jammed his fingers into the wall. Katherine ran, following the wall until she reached the bay door and managed to get it open enough to slip out. She ran but the doctor continued to follow her. She knew she could not outrun him so she outsmarted him by covering her eyes and running to a spot where she knew her motion would activate the security lights. He was unable to see because his eyes were so dilated from being in complete darkness.

Katherine reached her car and got inside but the man got there at the same time. He grabbed her around the neck and told her he should have killed her at the same time he killed her mother. It was at that moment that Katherine realized with whom she was dealing. She drove her car forward into trees, managing to scrape off the man, who was hanging onto her neck even as she drove the car.

In Chapter 48, Sato and Anderson learned that Nunez had helped Bellamy and Langdon escape. Sato ordered both Nunez and Anderson off the case.

In Chapter 49, Bellamy insisted to Langdon that the pyramid he had in the bag was the one of legend. When Langdon tried to argue, Bellamy told him he did not believe because he was not a member of the Masons and was not prepared to accept the truth. Langdon continued to doubt, especially since the pyramid of legend was so tall "God Himself can reach out and touch it" (246). Bellamy argued that since God is potentially in man, anything that was within man's reach was within God's reach.

Bellamy went on to explain that the Masonic Pyramid was referred to as a legend for the same reason many artists had imagined Moses as having horns. Just as a word was misinterpreted, leaving Moses with horns, so people took the idea of the legend of the Masonic Pyramid and believed it was a myth about the pyramid, not the legend to the pyramid. In reality, Bellamy said the Masonic Pyramid was a map while the capstone was the legend to that map. Because Langdon felt the code was easy, Bellamy asked him to translate it. When he finished, Langdon did not feel that he qualified as one of the truly enlightened for whom the mysteries of the pyramid were intended.

In Chapter 50, Nola Kaye, senior analyst for the CIA's office of security was also trying to translate the cipher on the side of the pyramid. Her translation came out to be only random letters. The x-ray of the pyramid's capstone showed there was text written on it as well, but the text was not clear enough to be read on the x-ray. Meanwhile, Sato sent CIA field-op specialists to bring the pyramid and capstone back to her. She gave no parameters for use of force, only telling the agents it was critical she received those two items.

In Chapter 51, as she drove toward the Library of Congress, Katherine thought about the man she had seen who tried to attack her. His body was covered with tattoos and he did not wear the wig that Abaddon had. She had no doubt he was the man who had



killed her mother even though it was said at the time he had drowned in the frozen river after he fell from a cliff when Peter shot him.

Katherine remembered their mother had been cooking Christmas dinner that day while she and Peter talked in the conservatory. Katherine was happy to see that her brother finally seemed to be recovering from the loss of his son, Zachary. Zachary had been rebellious even as a teen. Peter had decided to go ahead and give the boy the traditional Solomon inheritance when he was eighteen hoping it would help Zachary to mature. Instead Zachary only grew worse as he partied away his money in foreign countries. Zachary was killed in Soganlik Prison after he was arrested for trying to smuggle cocaine into Eastern Europe.

That Christmas, Katherine and Peter were surprised when they heard a voice behind them. The man claimed to be the one who had killed Zachary. He told Peter he wanted to pyramid that Zachary had told him that his father kept in the vault in his study. Peter claimed to not know what the man was talking about. Just as the man was threatening to shoot Katherine, their mother came into the room carrying a shotgun that she fired at the man. He shot blindly around the room and fell, dropping his gun. Peter grabbed it and followed the man, who was running away.

Mrs. Solomon went to Katherine to make sure she was okay. She saw blood and assumed it was from Katherine, but there were no wounds on Katherine's body. Katherine saw blood on her mother's shirt and a hole where the bullet had entered. Katherine called an ambulance, but it was too late. She heard a gunshot in the woods shortly before Peter returned to find his mother dead. His scream was like nothing she would ever hear again.

In Chapter 52, Mal'akh went back to Katherine's lab. He located the data room and storage units, but he was unable to get access to that room. He took one of the canisters of liquid hydrogen and slipped the tube under the door to the room that held the data. The liquid poured out and began to convert to highly flammable gas. He used Bunsen burner fuel to form a liquid path back out of the lab. Meanwhile, the 911 dispatch center received a call from a gas station. It was a woman asking police to be sent to Kalorama Heights where she believed her brother was being held prisoner. She also told the dispatcher she had been attacked at the SMSC.

Analysis

Varying meanings and translations of words can change the course of history and has affected the ideas many people have about historical items, like the Masonic Pyramid. Common thought has even affected the way that Langdon views the idea of the reality of the pyramid. "Langdon had expected a modicum of sanity from the Architect of the Capitol, but now it seemed Warren Bellamy was no more rational than the madman claiming Peter was in purgatory. Bellamy was insisting this stone pyramid was, in fact, the Masonic Pyramid of legend" (245).



As Bellamy tries to make Langdon understand that the story is the pyramid is no myth, he explains the different ways that the word legend can be interpreted. One meaning of the word legend is a story that has no basis in truth. The legend can also refer to words on a map used to interpret that map. Bellamy explains to Langdon that people heard the term “legend of the Masonic Pyramid” and did not realize that it referred to the capstone, the part of the pyramid that helps the reader understand what is written on the base portion of the pyramid.

Langdon continues to be puzzled about the pyramid when deciphers the code on the side, which he believed would be an easy translation, to discover he only has a jumble of letters that make no sense. It is at this point that Langdon realizes he is not as enlightened as he once thought he was. Note that he had gotten frustrated when Bellamy told Langdon he did not fully understand the pyramid or its story because he was not a Mason. Langdon is slightly offended by this mention that he cannot understand the symbols because he is not one of the brotherhood. Bellamy seemed to be trying to help Langdon understand there really are some things about the Masons and their secrets that one cannot know unless he is a member. An example is that the pyramid has a variety of layers built in to protect its secret.

The size of the pyramid is another specific which causes Langdon to doubt that this small stone piece is the Masonic Pyramid. Bellamy told Langdon in a preface to his explanation, “As you know, the legend speaks of a pyramid rising so high that God Himself can reach out and touch it” (246). The explanation is based on the idea that it is believed that men who are saved actually have God within them. In the case of the Masons they believe that an enlightened man has God inside them. Therefore, with this prerequisite that God is in man, the top of this small pyramid is easily within the reach of God, as He is embodied by man.

The idea of worthiness continues to be an issue as Bellamy argues man is worthy to have God living in him yet Mal’akh believes that man is unworthy of the truth about God, the truths that Katherine is proving in her lab. Langdon adds another level of complexity to this argument as he reminds Bellamy “I don’t know any Christians who consider themselves God’s equal” (247). Bellamy argues that the Bible speaks of man as being created in God’s image and that as the Bible states, “The kingdom of God is within you” (247). In this controversy of the ranking of man compared to God one must wonder if Mal’akh is right in trying to protect the people from truths they possibly cannot understand. On the other hand, by deciding he is the one sent to destroy Katherine’s work, Mal’akh has at some point along the line, decided that he is equal to God. One must wonder why he thinks he is any different from any other man. “Science is getting close, Mal’akh had realized. And I will not allow it to light the way for the unworthy” (263). How does he have the credentials to decide who is and is not worthy of knowledge?

Although the tone of this novel is serious and suspenseful for the most part, the author does use some literary techniques and spots of humor to lighten the tone. For instance when Langdon calls his former publisher for Katherine’s phone number the man thinks after hanging up with Langdon that “Book publishing would be so much easier without



the authors” (223). One must take into consideration that the publisher knows nothing of what is going on with Langdon and Katherine, only that he has gotten a strange phone call from Langdon asking for information but giving no idea when Langdon might have copy for him to publish.

Similes also help the reader to understand some of the circumstances in the novel by comparing an aspect the reader might not have a good grasp on to one more familiar. For instance, Langdon believes it is unwise to hide in the reading room at the Library of Congress. For those who have never been to the Library of Congress this might mean nothing. When Brown states “Hiding in here was like breaking into a cathedral and hiding on the altar” (231) the reader gets an idea how exposed the reading room was.

Similarly, Langdon thinks it makes little sense for Sato to think the wording on the side of the pyramid was an issue of national security. He believes the code is so easy to decipher it would be like encrypting the nuclear launch codes with a code that could be broken with the use of a decoder ring from a Cracker Jack box.

Discussion Question 1

From the information he receives in this section of the novel, do you think Langdon is any more convinced that the Masonic Pyramid really exists? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the strange death of Isabel Solomon. Why did Mal’akh break into the Solomon house? How did he know about the pyramid?

Discussion Question 3

What point does Bellamy make to Langdon when he invites him to decode the letters on the side of the pyramid?

Vocabulary

pungent, repository, dissemination, venerated, improvised, voluminous, paradoxes, oblique, projectile, feral, modicum, imbue, patronized, concurs, bungled, diabolical, adept, infantile, exuberant, debauchery, extradited, callously, contingency



Chapters 53-62

Summary

In Chapter 53, Bellamy suggested to Langdon that the capstone of the pyramid had the information he would need to make sense of the letters from the base of the pyramid. However, Bellamy told Langdon that he believed it was their duty to keep the capstone and the pyramid from being reunited. Despite what he had learned so far of his lack of understanding about the pyramid, Langdon continued to question Bellamy about the power the mysteries protected by the pyramid held. Bellamy told him that even though he was educated, he had also learned a respect for the miraculous.

In Chapter 54, the guard checking out the report that the bay door for Pod 5 was open was snagged by Mal'akh. Mal'akh stunned him with a punch but the man was alert enough to see Mal'akh lighting fuel from a Bunsen burner can. He watched as the flame traveled across the floor toward Katherine's lab. He struggled to his feet to get help but never saw the fireball that erupted from the lab. Meanwhile, Katherine could even see the explosion from her car as she drove toward the Library of Congress. She was confused about why Mal'akh would want to hurt and why he had not killed her when she was in his home. As she traced the location from which the explosion had come, she suddenly understood what Mal'akh had done.

In Chapter 55, Bellamy went on to tell Langdon that it was believed that the Ancient Mysteries were buried at the bottom of a spiral staircase, the entrance of which was hidden by a huge stone. The message on the pyramid should tell where the staircase was located. Langdon was surprised when Bellamy told him that they must protect the secret of the pyramid even it meant Peter would be killed. Bellamy told Langdon that Masons were sworn to protect each other except when it came to protecting the secret, keeping the secret safe was more important even than protecting the lives of other Masons.

Bellamy told Peter they needed to move on to find a safe place to put the pyramid and capstone. Langdon expressed fear for Katherine because she said she would meet them at the library but Bellamy ordered him to forget everything except the pyramid. They heard a crash coming from the direction of the doors of the tunnel that led to the Capitol Building. Meanwhile, Katherine pulled up in front of the Library of Congress. A homeless man watched as Katherine ran up to the doors of the library and knocked.

In Chapter 56, Katherine was relieved when Bellamy opened the door. Langdon was standing behind him. As the crashing from the tunnel doors continued, Bellamy told both Langdon and Katherine they had to go to a safer place. Katherine followed them to the reading room where she was surprised to see a pyramid. She realized it was that pyramid that had caused so much violence in her life. As she heard the doors to the tunnel finally burst open, Bellamy directed them to get inside a cabinet surrounded by the counters of the circulation desk.



In Chapter 57, as Mal'akh headed for his home on Kalorama Heights he thought about how his journey to this point in his life had started. He had been Inmate 37 at Soganlik Prison where he was imprisoned because of drugs. As he had lain in his bunk one night he heard the conversation between Peter and the prison administrator. He heard the administrator say that he would allow Peter's son to go free if Peter were to make a donation to the prison. He also heard Peter refuse to give any money to free his son, not wanting to teach him the wrong lesson. Peter asked to speak to his son, but he was not allowed to see him.

Knowing that Zachary Solomon had money, Inmate 37 arranged his release with the prison administrator. They agreed that Zachary Solomon would have to be dead. When the Solomons were told about Zachary's death they were shown pictures of a badly beaten body with its head bashed in. It was suspected that the prison administrator, to whom it was assumed all of Zachary's money had been transferred, had killed him. In reality, Inmate 37 had also killed the prison administrator so he could have all of Zachary's money.

He went to the Greek Islands where he was able to buy himself a new life and new identity. He called himself Andros Dareios, and he stopped doing drugs. His neighbors on the island were obsessed with their mental and physical fitness. Andros soon joined their obsession. He began weight training as well as taking steroids and growth hormones. He wanted to transform himself into the perfect male. He soon became irresistible to the women of the area. After several years, his life began to fall flat again. He wondered what he was missing until he saw a program about Freemasons. It was when the narrator mentioned the pyramid that Andros remembered what Zachary Solomon had heard from his father about the pyramid. He wondered if there was still something left he could get from Zachary.

Mal'akh believed he had failed when he first went to the Solomon house to get the pyramid because he had been unprepared. He remembered standing on the icy bank of the river while Peter pointed a gun at him. Andros had told Peter that if he pulled the trigger, he would haunt Peter forever. Peter did pull the trigger but Andros survived and was reborn as Mal'akh. The tattoos hid the gunshot scars on his once perfect body.

In Chapter 58, once operation leader Agent Turner Simkins and his men entered the library they turned off the lights and put on night vision goggles. No one moved and no one surrendered when the laser sighted guns made sweeps of the room. Simkins turned on the heat sensitivity function on his goggles, allowing him to see where Bellamy and Langdon had been. He noticed there had been activity at one of the reading desks. He also found a fresh handprint on the central counter of the circulation desk.

Believing the men were inside the cabinet, Simkins shouted he could see a light inside to console, hoping they would come out. They did not. Simkins opened the cabinet and discovered a set of steps. The sound of machinery came from that area. Simkins followed the heat markings to a door and into the stacks beneath the Library of Congress. They followed Bellamy and Langdon as the motion-activated lights came on



as the two ran through the maze of bookshelves. The CIA agents quickly caught up with them. Bellamy seemed to be in the rear and Simkins caught him. Bellamy claimed to know nothing when Simkins asked about Langdon.

In Chapter 59, Langdon thought how Bellamy had entered the stacks alone. He had sent Katherine and Langdon to lie on the conveyor belt that usually transported books. Bellamy told Langdon to keep his cell phone on as someone would call soon and offer them help. Bellamy said that they should trust this man who called.

In Chapter 60, when the female security guard arrived at Mak'akh's Kalorama house she did not see anything out of the ordinary. She began walking around the house and she noticed a black limousine slow down as it drove past. The guard continued walking. When she reached the backyard she checked in with her headquarters saying that everything was okay. Before she got back to the front she noticed a blue glow coming from the windows. When she got closer she noticed a bit of black paint peeling off the window. She looked inside but wished she had not when she saw what was there. She was still staring in horror and groping for her radio when Mal'akh used his Taser on her.

In Chapter 61, Bellamy was blindfolded by the CIA agents and walked back through the stacks. He remembered the last time that the pyramid and capstone were in the same room together. Bellamy had been called to the Solomon estate by Peter to witness Solomon receiving his inheritance. Peter had given Zachary the information he needed to transfer the money into his own name. Peter told Zachary there was another choice he had to make since Zachary was the oldest Solomon child. He pulled out the stone pyramid and told Zachary that he had the choice between wealth or wisdom, a choice that Zachary did not understand.

Peter offered Zachary the pyramid that Peter said led to a great, lost treasure. Zachary asked for more information but when Peter told him the treasure, the Ancient Mysteries, were connected with Freemasonry, Zachary laughed and said that he was not interested. Peter indicated that he knew Zachary did not understand it but insisted that guarding the pyramid was a "rare privilege" (303). Zachary swore he would never be interested in the pyramid. As he left the room with his financial portfolio, Peter called after him telling him that he must not tell anyone about the pyramid.

It was at this point that Bellamy suggested to Peter that someone else be put in charge of watching over the pyramid and capstone. Peter chose not to do so at that time. It was not until the man had broken into the Solomon house seeking the pyramid that Peter decided to follow Bellamy's advice. Bellamy told Peter he could hide the base of the pyramid in the subbasement of the Capitol. He suggested the capstone be given to someone whom Peter trusted.

In Chapter 62, as they rode the conveyor belt Langdon asked Katherine if she was okay. She told him she thought the pyramid he had with him was the reason that her mother was killed. She told Langdon the man who had killed her mother was still alive. She had seen him at her lab earlier that day. He began telling her about the things that



he had been through that day as well as what he knew about Peter. He also told her about the mysteries the pyramid and capstone were supposed to protect.

When Katherine told Langdon to open his eyes, he was surprised to see they were in another circulation room. Katherine took his bag and set it on a table. She unzipped it to look at the pyramid. She asked if the small package held the piece that would decipher the pyramid why they did not open it right then. Katherine indicated that she did not want to lose another member of the family because of the pyramid. Langdon was caught between Katherine's desire to save her brother and Bellamy's instructions not to put the two pieces together. Katherine made her own decision and broke the seal on the box.

Analysis

Bellamy gets a chance to say I told you so to Langdon when the code on the side of the pyramid does not turn out to be as simple to interpret as Langdon at first thought it would be. As he explains that the secret of the pyramid is hidden under layers of cloaking, Bellamy tells Langdon, "There is more to this pyramid than meets the eye" (266). Apparently, Bellamy allowed Langdon to try to decode the ciphers on the pyramid because he already knew those letters by themselves would not tell Langdon anything. When they discuss actually using the capstone to decode the message, Bellamy warns Langdon that is not a good idea.

Just as Langdon questions the loyalties of different characters when he is working with Sato and Anderson, Bellamy now gives Langdon a reason to question Bellamy's loyalty. Even though Bellamy appears at first to be as concerned about Peter as Langdon is when they discuss giving Mal'akh the information he wants, Bellamy warns Langdon that he should let Peter die before he gives Mal'akh the secrets of the Masonic Pyramid. Bellamy claims that Peter would want it that way.

Langdon has gone back and forth on his opinion of whether or not he and the others should reveal the secrets that the Masons work so hard to keep secret. For instance, when Sato orders Anderson to shoot out the lock on the door of Peter's storage room in the Capitol subbasement, Langdon tries to convince her not to do so. He argues that if Peter is willing to give up his right hand to protect the secret, perhaps they should not try to unveil the secret. When it comes to saving his friend's life, however, Langdon cannot believe the Masons would place more importance on their secrets than the life of one of their brothers.

By considering the information that Peter has given and withheld from Mal'akh, it is apparent that Peter wants to keep the secret of the Masonic Pyramid. He has told Mal'akh who has the capstone to the pyramid and where this pyramid is located. He has told Mal'akh that Langdon was the only one who could decipher the pyramid. Peter has also given Mal'akh information about Katherine, her work, and her lab. Remember that Katherine was stunned he had shared this information with anyone because he was the one who insisted that her work be kept secret. The information that Peter has shared



potentially puts his friends and loved ones in danger. However, he has not told Mal'akh the location of Ancient Mysteries.

Katherine takes a different point of view on the revealing of the Masonic secrets. She has a deep-seated hate for the pyramid because she believes it is what cost her mother her life. She has decided that no secret is worth risking the life of another close family member. For this reason she breaks the seal on the box despite Langdon's arguments they might not be doing the right thing.

In this section, the author adds another layer to the story as he incorporates the history of the pyramid and its effect on the Solomon family. One of the back stories told is how the man known by Katherine as Dr. Abaddon came to the Solomon's house on Christmas Day ten years prior asking Peter for the pyramid. He claimed to be the man who had killed Zachary. During an exchange of bullets, Katherine and Peter's mother was fatally shot. Peter cornered the man on a cliff above a river and shot him. It was believed the man was dead until he made the comment to Katherine that he should have killed her when he killed her mother.

Zachary's story is another to which the reader should pay close attention. Notice in particular how the narrator refers to Zachary all through the story of his time in prison. First, Inmate 37's name is never given. It is never specified that Zachary is his cellmate. The reader assumes that Inmate 37 goes to the prison administrator with a plan to get Zachary to sign his money over to them and then kill him. Notice the narrator never says anything about them killing Zachary the references say things like "Zachary Solomon would have to die for this to work" (281). Notice also that the man who robs the Solomon house looking for the pyramid years later seems to be very familiar with the property. He runs to the river expecting to find a bridge. In fact, a boulder by the side of the river read Zach's Bridge but the bridge was gone. The reader can assume that Zachary told this inmate about the bridge at the same time he told him about the pyramid but it seems unlikely the man would have been able to go directly to it without direct knowledge.

Consider also the standoff between Peter and the man who turned into Mal'akh. Peter accused the man of killing his son but Mal'akh blamed Peter for Zachary's death. When Peter told Mal'akh he knew nothing, Mal'akh thought to himself that he knew everything.

Although the tone of the novel remains very dark and suspenseful, the author does inject some comic relief from time to time. One of those episodes of comic relief comes in the form of Katherine interaction with the homeless man. The man's disbelief in her unusual behavior and his reactions to that behavior gives the reader an opportunity to chuckle. The man responds in his thoughts to Katherine's asking if he has a cell phone "Lady, I don't have a left shoe" (276).

As Katherine banged on the doors of the library the man struggled to make sense of the situation and determined that Katherine "must really need a book" (276).



Discussion Question 1

Why do you think the back story about Zachary and his death in the prison is significant? Why does the author include it in this part of the novel?

Discussion Question 2

How does the author use cliffhangers to increase the tone of suspense in the novel?

Discussion Question 3

Can a man be intelligent and also believe in myths and legends? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

sabotaged, archetypal, confidant, belligerent, ramifications, ingenious, enigmatic, nubile, plethora, unfathomable, implausible, luminescent, pristine, supine, sarcophagus, innocuous, transom, abject, echelons, stoicism, austere, adamant



Chapters 63-76

Summary

In Chapter 63, an old, blind man, sitting in a gazebo called Shadow House was called to by a young man. The young man told him Warren Bellamy had left a strange question for him on voicemail. When he heard the question, the older man asked to be helped inside.

In Chapter 64, Katherine pried open the box in which the capstone had been stored. There was an inscription of the piece of pure gold. When Katherine read the six words, she could not believe that was all that the capstone said. Meanwhile, Sato had gotten updates from her operatives. Bellamy had been caught but was not talking. Nola was unable to read what was written on the capstone from the x-ray. She was also having no luck with the characters on the pyramid base.

The agent who had Bellamy in custody was surprised when Sato told him where she wanted him to take Bellamy for his interrogation. She knew she needed a place that was very private. Bellamy's key fob with the letters USBG had given her the idea where they needed to go.

Katherine and Langdon were both surprised and disappointed by the message inscribed on the capstone. The words state only: "The secret hides within The Order." As they puzzled over the meaning of the phrase, Katherine asked Langdon if her brother had not said the capstone was supposed to bring order out of chaos.

In Chapter 65, at his home, Mal'akh fixed the paint on the window that obscured vision into his workspace. He turned on his shower in preparation for his cleansing ritual as he thought about how he would soon be transformed.

In Chapter 66, Langdon was considering that Peter had simply been given misinformation about the capstone when Katherine asked him if the date 1514 meant anything to him. She had noticed what she believed was a date on the box. Langdon recognized the symbol she had seen but knew that it was not a date. It referred to a person.

In Chapter 67, after his superior had dismissed the young man who helped him into the house, the man wondered about the question that Bellamy had left on voice mail. He typed the phrase "Is there no help for the widow's son?" into his computer and was surprised by the number of hits he got. It was first used by King Solomon as that great leader mourned the death of a friend. Masons still used the phrase as a way to send a distress call. It meant another Mason needed help.

In Chapter 68, Langdon tells Katherine that the AD stands for Albrecht Dürer. That artist had hidden the numbers 1514 in one particular piece of his work Melencolia I. The piece, which shows man's struggle to understand the Ancient Mysteries, is highly



symbolic. Although Langdon wanted to go to the museum where the piece was displayed, Katherine suggested they look at it on the computer instead. Langdon pointed out that there was what he called a magic square included in the engraving. He indicated it was the key to deciphering the pyramid.

In Chapter 69, Bellamy, still blindfolded, wondered where he was being taken. He heard bits of conversation and then heard the car in which he was riding being driven through some sort of garage door. When the car stopped he was pulled out. He smelled an Earth smell and noticed the air was warm and humid. As they moved through another door Bellamy recognized the place as somewhere that he once went for comfort. He was left alone in a place known as The Jungle. He suddenly heard someone breathing beside him and the strike of a match. Sato pulled off his blindfold. She seemed happy to see that he was so afraid.

In Chapter 70, as Langdon prepared to use the magic square to decode the base of the pyramid he paused wondering if Peter would really want them to decipher it. Katherine noticed his paused and offered to do the work for him. When she finished, she thought the words still did not make sense until Langdon told her it was Latin. Meanwhile, the old man listened to the voice mail from Bellamy.

As Katherine looked at the letters she saw the Latin words “Jeova Sanctus Unus.” They were both perplexed by the phrase, which could be translated as “One true god.” Katherine was angry and frustrated because the man who was holding Peter expected a specific location. Langdon shared his concern that the location would turn out to be metaphorical. While they talked, Langdon’s phone rang. It was the elderly man asking if Langdon needed sanctuary. Langdon assured the man he had taken care of the map when he was asked but Langdon argued the pyramid was not a map. The old man countered as he said that the pyramid was indeed a map that pointed to a real location. The old man gave Langdon a coded address and told Langdon to come to him.

In Chapter 71, after he finished cleansing, Mal’akh admired his body for what he thought might be the last time. He looked at the spot on his head that remained free of tattoos. When he checked his phone he noticed that he had message from his contact. The message was that Mal’akh would get what he wanted within the hour.

In Chapter 72, the agents studied the reading room at the Library of Congress trying to determine where Langdon had gone. They noticed heat images on the conveyor belt which told them Langdon was not only no longer in the building but that he had someone with him. The team leader radioed a car belonging to Katherine Solomon was outside the library. She had been seen going into the library. The agents learned the conveyor had taken the two to the Adams Building.

In Chapter 73, Langdon and Katherine flagged down a cab. Katherine told the driver they needed to go northwest. They had already seen the CIA agents searching the area. Now Katherine pointed out the black CIA helicopter flying low over the area. Katherine threw Langdon’s cell phone out the window, telling him they needed to go completely off the grid.



Meanwhile, the driver Omar Amirana heard a dispatch warning cab drivers to keep a look out for Katherine and Langdon. Omar responded that he had those two people in his cab at that time. Simkins responded to Omar asking first their destination. Simkins also asked if there was an intercom system in the cab.

In Chapter 74, in *The Jungle*, Bellamy asked Sato if she knew the whereabouts of Peter. Bellamy had a suspicion that Sato was behind everything that had happened so far that night. She warned him that the man who did hold Peter captive had a good deal of power that could change the world as he knew it. She told him the only way she could think to avert a disaster was to cooperate with the man and his demands. She threatened Bellamy but he said that he would not help her or give her any secrets.

In Chapter 75, Katherine suddenly shouted out that they were going to the wrong place. She claimed to have figured out the pyramid and capstone. She insisted they needed to go to Freedom Plaza. She drew a Jewish star over the pyramid on a one-dollar bill and pointed with her pen asking Langdon if he could not see what she was pointing at. At first, Langdon tried to pass off what she was trying to tell him as a coincidence but then suddenly he saw what she did.

Simkins listened to the conversation between Katherine and Langdon. Katherine asked the cab driver to take them to Freedom Plaza. Simkins could hear the conversation. He also heard as Omar loudly confirmed their new destination. Simkins sent his agents to that new destination.

In Chapter 76, when Langdon and Katherine left the cab at Freedom Plaza, Langdon asked Omar to stay there because they would be back. When they did come back they asked Omar which direction Alexandria, Virginia was from them. They ran toward the train station talking about their plans to take the Blue Line there. Omar told Simkins about the update and was surprised when a helicopter landed next to him. When Omar showed him the dollar bill Katherine had given him, Simkins believed they were going to the George Washington Masonic Memorial. Simkins thanked Omar and got back on board the helicopter. Omar watched as it headed toward Alexandria.

Analysis

In this section, Bellamy voices his concerns that Sato is working against him. He is inclined to believe that Sato may even be the one who set up the entire plot in order to uncover the secrets of the Masons. Bellamy swears that it does not matter what she threatens him with, he will not give up the secrets that she hopes to uncover. Sato tells Bellamy: “there are forces at work that I fear you have not yet grasped. The man who kidnapped Peter Solomon holds enormous power . . . a power that you apparently have yet to realize” (345). Sato does not elaborate on what power the man holds, but since Bellamy did basically sacrifice himself to the CIA in order to keep them away from the pyramid and capstone, Sato must have something that will deeply affect the Masons and Bellamy personally in order to think that she can sway his mindset.



As Katherine and Langdon begin to try to discover the secret location the pyramid holds, they are confounded by hidden meanings even in the messages meant to decode the pyramid. For instance, Katherine remembers all her life that the purpose of the pyramid's capstone was to bring order out of chaos. They discover this phrase indicates that the capstone will bring order out of the chaos of the letters that were engraved on the body of the pyramid. A number and letters engraved on the box in which the capstone was kept leads them to the engraving that gives them the code they need to correctly order the letters on the body of the pyramid. Even after they have arranged these letters correctly, they still do not have the location of place as the man holding Peter expects. Despite their doubts about the pyramid, the old man who offers them a safe place tell them that the pyramid does point to a physical location.

The reader learns that Mal'akh does have a contact who is giving him information about the progress being made. He gets a text message updating him on Langdon's progress. Since the reader does not know when the email was sent it is impossible to pinpoint who might have sent it. Most likely candidates include Bellamy and Sato.

A significant symbol in this section is the Melencolia I, an engraving that is fittingly about man's frustration with his inability to understand the Ancient Mysteries. A signature on the box that held the capstone led Katherine and Langdon to this piece of artwork. The engraving includes a magic square that tells a person the correct order in which to put the letters from the base of the pyramid.

Bellamy, as well as the other CIA agents, are surprised by the location that Sato chooses in order to do her interrogation of Bellamy. She thinks to herself that she does not want to take him back to headquarters because anything they say will have to be video and audio taped. She instead decides to take him to the rainforest portion of the National Botanical Gardens.

The author adds a touch of humor as he comments on Sato's decision to smoke her cigarette even in the carefully controlled climate of this indoor rainforest. Her actions are compared to "ecoterrorism in this carefully calibrated environment" (344).

As Langdon has been at odds with other characters about the identity of the pyramid, Langdon also finds himself at odds with the man who offers them refuge. On the phone the man refers to the pyramid as a map, a reference that Langdon's intellectual nature cannot help but refute. He is still determined the pyramid and its legend is only a myth even though he had been presented with proof that they pyramid does exist. The older man will also not back down on his belief that the pyramid is a map.

Discussion Question 1

In your opinion, who is Mal'akh's contact? Give reasons to support your answer.



Discussion Question 2

Discuss the way that the capstone helps to bring order out of chaos. How does the creator of these secrets play on the multiple meanings of words and phrases in order to keep others confused about what they are reading?

Discussion Question 3

Why do you think Sato wanted to take Bellamy to a private place to interrogate him?

Vocabulary

pall, effulgence, rendezvous, concur, seminal, overt, disparate, emaciated, acquiesced, ubiquitous, visage, carnal, fontanel, sanguine, vestiges, emphatically, superimpose



Chapters 77-84

Summary

In Chapter 77, Mal'akh remembered his fall into the frozen river the day Peter shot him. He had escaped death only because he managed to break a hole in the ice. He ran until he reached the highway. A man stopped for him and Mal'akh told him he was shot by a hunter and needed to go to the hospital. Even though he knew they were not going to a hospital, Mal'akh motioned for the driver to turn at the next exit.

Mal'akh, still on Andros at that point, woke in the closed hotel that he had broken into earlier. He had killed the man who picked him up. He had picked the birdshot out of his chest and was appalled by his wounds. He was hungry, but he could find no food in the truck. He changed the appearance of the truck since the man who had driven it was reported missing. When he later saw a newscast that Isabel Solomon had been killed, he knew he had to disappear completely.

Mal'akh moved into an apartment in New York. He spent his time researching the Masons and their secrets. He knew he was the only non-Mason who knew the pyramid was real and knew the name of its caretaker. He began buying and using drugs again. One day he learned from the man who sold him drugs that he had gotten a tattoo to cover a scar. Mal'akh went to a tattoo artist asking for a tattoo to cover his scars. He did not know what design he wanted. The artist told him to come back when he was ready.

Mal'akh began studying tattooing and tattoo images, as well as the magical arts. It was at this point that Mal'akh decided he wanted to transform himself into a sacred being. He began performing sacrifices and started dreaming of a phoenix. He took his new name, Mal'akh, from Milton's *Paradise Lost*. He named himself after Moloch "the warrior demon who fought against the light" (363). He created his own life-sized tattoo of his entire body and took this picture of the tattoo he wanted back to the tattoo artist.

In Chapter 78, Simkins landed in a CIA helicopter at the King Street subway station. It was six minutes before the train on which he believed Katherine and Langdon were riding would arrive. He and his men cleared the platform. Meanwhile, as Katherine was riding the train, she wondered why the CIA was interested in the Masonic Pyramid. She thought to herself that they would soon be in a safe place. Back at the King Street subway station, when the Blue Line stopped the CIA agents searched each car systematically and determined that Katherine and Langdon were not on board. Simkins wondered where they had gone.

In Chapter 79, Langdon and Katherine complimented each other on their acting skills as they walked up to the building where they had been offered refuge. Katherine had used the dollar bill and its pyramid to point out the fact the intercom light was on in the taxi. Langdon understood that the CIA knew they were in Omar's cab and they were listening to their conversation through the cabbie's phone lying open on the dash. While they



talked, they were walking up to the Washington National Cathedral where they had been offered refuge. One of the front doors opened. Once they identified themselves, the old man expressed relief that they had finally arrived.

In Chapter 80, when Sato learned her CIA agents had lost Langdon, she began questioning Bellamy again. She began lining out the movements she knew Bellamy had made that day. He was shocked that she knew about the phone call he had received from the man who kidnapped Peter and the text message he had sent the man later. Sato had gotten this information from his phone. They also had put a wiretap on Peter's phone when they suspected he was a threat to national security. That was how she knew to get the x-ray of Langdon's bag and also how she knew Langdon was at the Capitol in the first place.

Sato told Bellamy that both he and Peter were considered threats to the national security because they were Masons. Before that time they had guarded their secrets carefully. Recently, they had become lax. Sato believed the most dangerous secret the Masons guarded was about to be revealed. She tried to convince him they were on the same side but when Bellamy continued to argue, she asked an agent standing outside for her briefcase. Sato told Bellamy that she had something inside her case that would convince him to cooperate with her.

In Chapter 81, the narrator describes how Mal'akh had a secret portion of his basement set aside in which he practiced his art. In the main room Mal'akh began to prepare for his evening. Along with a virgin silk robe and a flask of purified water, he put a knife in an ivory box. The knife had cost him 1.6 million dollars and was said to be the most famous one in history. Mal'akh used a bowl of Peter's blood to trace an outline of his hand on a piece of vellum he had made himself. He used the hand to recreate the Hand of Mysteries. After the blood was dry, he set this vellum on fire and mixed the ashes with into Peter's blood to make the ink he would use write on his final piece of untattooed skin.

In Chapter 82, Reverend Colin Galloway led Katherine and Langdon to his office. They learned that the reverend was also in the Masons and was familiar with the trouble that Peter was in. They talked about what Katherine and Langdon had discovered so far about the pyramid. When they told him they thought the pyramid was not a geographic map he asked to be allowed to feel it. He felt both pieces of the pyramid as well as the box in which the capstone had been stored.

He told the two that if all they had learned from the pyramid was that it said there was one true god, they had come nowhere close to decoding it. When Langdon argued, the reverend told him that the pyramid had the ability to change physical forms. He offered to make it do so if it would help Langdon believe him. He pointed out that people had once thought the world was flat until it was revealed to them by a greater mind that it was actually round.



Katherine spoke up about breaking the seal on the box. She told the reverend that she felt they had no choice but to do so. The priest scolded her for the decision, telling her she had set in motion events from which there would be no return.

In Chapter 83, Bellamy expected Sato to bring tools of torture out of her briefcase. Instead, the briefcase held a laptop computer. Sato logged onto the CIA's secure website. Bellamy was horrified when he saw the video that she played for him. He believed what he was looking at was impossible, and he realized he had made a horrible mistake.

In Chapter 84, the reverend talked to Langdon and Katherine telling him how Peter had come to him about a year ago telling him that he felt some kind of darkness taking over his life. The reverend told Langdon and Katherine that the knowledge that the pyramid protected had the power to transform lives. He wondered if they were not reaching the proper time for that knowledge to be unleashed. Galloway realized that while as a Mason he had played the role of gatekeeper for the knowledge the pyramid held, he was now called to be a guide. He asked Langdon to take his hand.

Galloway instructed Langdon to feel the inside of the box in which the capstone had been stored. He finally felt a tiny raised dot in the middle of the bottom of the box. When he pressed down on it, as advised by Galloway, he was able to see the imprint of the dot surrounded by a circle on his fingertip. Katherine recognized it as the alchemical symbol for gold, while Langdon said it was also a circumpunct. He began listing the many meanings of this symbol when Galloway broke in and told Langdon it was also a symbol used to portray the Ancient Mysteries.

Galloway then asked for the Masonic ring that Peter had worn and explained it had been made at the same time as the pyramid and was worn by the man who guarded the pyramid. Langdon explored the ring with his fingers and discovered there was a tiny raised degree sign on the band. When he thought about the Masonic saying, "All is revealed at the thirty-third degree," Langdon began rotating the ring. He rotated the ring the right number of degrees, not expecting what would come next. There was a click when he aligned the degree sign on the ring and the circumpunct in the box.

Analysis

As the characters seem to be getting closer and closer to the answers they are seeking from the pyramid, the author adds more cliffhangers. He leads the reader right up to the edge of what appears to be a breakthrough on the part of the main characters and then ends the chapter. Often, the next chapter starts with a different set of characters. The author does this multiple times with Bellamy's character when he is in the Jungle being interrogated by Sato. In this section the author leaves the reader on a cliff after Bellamy's shock and realization that he had made a major mistake after Sato showed him something on the CIA's secure website. The author ends the chapter without letting the reader know what it was that was shocking enough to make Bellamy change his mind about his stance on helping the CIA.



Also in the section, the reader learns the identity of the man who has been keeping Mal'akh up to date on the progress with the pyramid. Bellamy has been sending messages to Mal'akh hoping to delay Peter's death by baiting Mal'akh with good news. The reader also learns how the CIA came to get so much background information about Peter, Langdon and Bellamy. Instead of being the ones who initiated Peter's kidnapping and the strange search for the pyramid as Bellamy, it turns out the CIA had gotten a tip that Peter was a threat to national security. They had been wiretapping his phone, allowing them to access all of Peter's phone conversations and text messages.

Transformation becomes important as Mal'akh prepares for what he will be the pinnacle of his personal transformation, and Galloway explains to Langdon and Katherine that the pyramid is capable of physical transformation. In Mal'akh's case it was a conversation with a man who had gotten a tattoo that sparked Mal'akh's interest in taking back control of his life. His study of symbols to determine which tattoo he might like led him to discover dark Arts and his ultimate desire to make himself into a sacred being. Not only had he completely tattooed himself and castrated himself, Mal'akh also followed special cleansing rituals. He had a secret room in his basement in which he performed sacrifices of animals and practiced his dark art.

With the pyramid, Langdon and Katherine are surprised when Galloway tells them that the pyramid is capable of physical transformation. "Professor, as you know, the promise of this pyramid is one of miraculous transformative power. Legend holds that this pyramid can change its shape . . . alter its physical form to reveal its secrets" (386). He asks Langdon to set aside his disbelief while he shows him this transformation. The first change is the change in Langdon's fingertip when he presses it against the dot on the bottom of the box in which the capstone had been stored. With this indentation on his finger, Langdon is able to see what the symbol.

The ability for the pyramid to speak to senses other than just the eyesight is stressed in this section as the blind reverend examines it. He is able to "see" things right away that both Katherine and Langdon missed. Apparently one of the layers of veiling in the pyramid includes tactile hints as well as visual ones. While the Masons probably knew about the circumpunct on the bottom of the box, it is a novelty as Langdon discovers the tiny dot as well as the degree sign on the ring that fits into the symbol on the bottom of the box. Word play continues as Langdon discovers that the phrase "all is revealed at the thirty-third degree" possibly refers to degree not only as the highest level of the Masons but also as the degrees, or the distance in a circle the ring needs to be turned in order to transform the box.

Mal'akh is another character who also realizes the power of words as he delves deeper into the dark Arts. At this point Mal'akh is still going by the name of Andros and has not yet made his transformation to Mal'akh. "He learned that sacred words, if properly spoken, functioned like keys that opened gateways to other worlds" (360). Mal'akh indicates he has learned the power of the words associated with the dark arts and the way he can use these words to make himself more powerful.



As Mal'akh's descent into the dark Arts is described, he considers the meaning of his decision to become evil. "What is my destiny? All the ancient texts spoke of good and evil . . . and of man's need to choose between them" (362). Mal'akh had no qualms about his decision to become evil he knew it was a characteristic necessary for the world. He is affiliated with the darkness. While people like Katherine create things and unveil facts, Mal'akh believes that he has been sent to destroy things and prevent the spread of knowledge. This is why he destroyed Katherine's lab.

There are a few significant symbols introduced in this section of the novel. One of these is the sacrificial knife that Mal'akh bought for 1.6 million dollars. He indicates that the knife is famous. The reader will later learn the true significance of this knife. The circumpunct also turns out to be an important symbol. Langdon goes through a list of the things this symbol can mean. Galloway tells him that in addition to all of these things it is also representative of the Ancient Mysteries.

Discussion Question 1

What do you think Sato showed Bellamy that shocked him so badly and made him rethink his decision to work against Sato?

Discussion Question 2

Now that the narrator has told the reader more about Mal'akh deciding to become a spiritual being, do you understand more about his mindset and actions?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the conversation between Langdon and Galloway about the pyramid's ability to transform itself. Why do you think Langdon is hesitant about setting aside his disbelief?

Vocabulary

turbulent, irrefutable, voraciously, entropy, finial, phalanx, penultimate, cataclysm, clandestine, cerulean, primeval, tincture, rood, foliated, reredos, replete, apocalyptic, corporeal, visceral, heretical, miniscule, alchemy, circumpunct



Chapters 85-95

Summary

In Chapter 85, Galloway smiled when he imagined the looks of shock on Katherine and Langdon's faces when the box collapsed. The cube had become a cross. Although Katherine saw it as a symbol of Christianity, Langdon explained this cross had a different meaning. It is the visual representation of man and God becoming one "as above, so below" (401). With the circumpunct at the center of the cross, Langdon explained the symbol was a rose cross. As Galloway spoke about the connection between the Masons and Rosicrucianism, Langdon remembered that the phrase "Jeova Sanctus Unus" was a pseudonym for Isaacus Neutonus.

As Langdon talked, Katherine suddenly realized how to transform the pyramid but as she began excitedly telling the men what she believed, Galloway told her to be quiet. He had heard the sounds of someone entering the church even though Katherine and Langdon had not yet heard anything. Meanwhile, Bellamy tried to get through to Langdon on his cell phone to tell him about what Sato had showed him. He was unable to get through because Katherine had destroyed Langdon's phone.

In Chapter 86, as the narrator continues to describe Mal'akh's actions in his sacred room it appeared that he planned to sacrifice Peter in order to make himself holy. Mal'akh believed Peter deserved what was about to happen to him because he had sacrificed his own son at one point. Mal'akh knew that Zachary had chosen poorly when his father had presented him with the choice of wealth or wisdom but did not believe Peter was right in leaving Zachary in the prison when he had to opportunity to save him.

In Chapter 87, Langdon and Katherine ran in the direction Galloway had directed them. When they came to the open area of the cathedral, they were surprised to see searchlights from a helicopter. They were able to run across the open expanse of yard when the cathedral's façade blocked the searchlights. Meanwhile, Galloway went to meet the CIA agents at the front door of the cathedral.

In Chapter 88, back at CIA headquarters, Rick Parrish, a worker in systems security, called Nola to let her know he thought he had something that might be significant to the project on which she was working. Parrish told her about the hacker they had stopped. Some of the keywords he was searching were the same ones with which Nola was working. Nola asked him to bring her the information he was working on right away.

In Chapter 89, Langdon and Katherine made their way to Cathedral College. They went to the downstairs kitchen because Katherine said she needed a lab. When they turned on the lights the exhaust fans came on automatically. She prepared to boil a pot of water as she explained to Langdon that on the Newton Scale, thirty-three degrees was the temperature at which water boiled. Meanwhile, in the CIA helicopter the thermal



sensor picked up the heat coming from Cathedral College as the water began boiling and the steam escaped through the exhaust fans.

Katherine explained to Langdon that she believed part of the pyramid had been made with a substance that would glow when it reached a certain temperature. Katherine turned off the lights in the kitchen, and they could see a message beginning to glow. As the pyramid came to the correct temperature, Langdon and Katherine could see the three words clearly.

In Chapter 90, the words on the pyramid were "Eight Franklin Square." Langdon believed it was a street address. Katherine urged him to call Mal'akh's cell phone number since it was ten minutes to midnight. He was surprised when a woman answered the phone. She said she was Officer Paige Montgomery from Preferred Security and that Peter had been asking for him. She said Peter was also asking for Katherine. The woman said the medics were working on Peter and that she could not talk to him on the phone. She told them that they should come to the house in Kalorama Heights as soon as possible.

In Chapter 91, when Katherine and Langdon went upstairs, they were spotted by CIA agents. Langdon told Sato what they had just learned, that Peter had been found and that he was in bad shape. Although Katherine said the emergency was over because Peter was safe, Sato disagreed. Langdon and Katherine offered to give the CIA the pyramid and handed over Langdon's bag. When she saw the address, Sato asked if they had given it to the man yet. They said they had not because the security guard had answered the man's phone.

Sato scolded both Langdon and Katherine for working against the CIA and possibly ruining their chances of catching the man who had hurt Peter. As she was finishing, Bellamy was brought into the room. Sato told them that Bellamy was going to send the man a message, the way he had been doing all that night. Bellamy took and sent a picture of the capstone. Mal'akh was instructed call for the missing piece, a word from the message that Bellamy covered with his thumb.

In Chapter 92, Langdon was confused and wondered why Bellamy had switched sides. He heard CIA agents bringing Galloway into the room where they were sitting. At that time, Mal'akh finally called Bellamy as requested. Bellamy asked for proof that Peter was still alive. Bellamy makes an arrangement with Mal'akh to meet him on Franklin Square. Once Bellamy had Peter he would give Mal'akh the address. The CIA agents hurried into action.

Katherine begged Sato to let her go to the house at Kalorama Heights. Not only did she want to see her brother she also argued with Sato that by going there they could find information they needed about the man. Sato agreed to let them go and sent Agent Hartmann with them. Meanwhile, Galloway was feeling the pyramid. Galloway requested that Langdon give Peter the message that the pyramid had kept its secret "sincerely." He stressed the word "sincerely."



In Chapter 93, the CIA set up near Franklin Square, waiting for the man to come with Peter. Sato waited for a phone call from Nola telling her which building was at the address eight Franklin Square and a call letting her know what was happening at Kalorama Heights.

In Chapter 94, as the CIA agent sped toward the house on Kalorama Heights, Langdon worried the pyramid might be damaged. He noticed that the capstone and pyramid were covered with white globs that he identified as wax. Before he and Katherine had time to think about what the wax meant, they arrived at the man's house. There were vehicles parked haphazardly in the front yard. The front door was open and they could hear voices inside.

A woman was sitting at the dining room table with her back to them. Katherine asked where Peter was but the woman did not answer. Langdon also realized what he had first thought were emergency vehicles were just a strange collection of everyday cars. The voices were coming from a television. He hollered to Katherine to wait but it was too late.

In Chapter 95, as Katherine had run toward the security guard her feet got tangled in something and she went airborne. When she turned over, she saw Hartmann behind Langdon. He had been impaled through the neck by a screwdriver. A man in a white loincloth came in the door after Hartmann. Katherine saw him use a Taser on Langdon. The man bound Katherine's wrists and ankles. He stuffed a rag in her mouth.

Langdon tried to get up but was unable to do so. As he looked at the bottom of the pyramid, which had fallen out of his bag, he realized the bottom was covered with engraved symbols. He realized that Galloway knew that Langdon and Katherine had not come close to deciphering the pyramid's message. The word sincerely that Galloway had included to Peter indicated that the pyramid had indeed kept its message secret.

As Langdon began to get control of his body back he looked in Katherine's direction. He was shocked to see that she was bound and gagged, but was even more surprised and disgusted by the tattooed man who had bound her. He recognized the symbols as those associated with dark magic. The man grabbed Langdon's head and smashed it into the hardwood, knocking him out.

Analysis

Just like people can transform themselves into a different type of person, as Mal'akh has done, so can physical objects transform, Langdon and Katherine learn from Galloway. They had not believed the pyramid could transform itself but have three different instances where they see it to be true. First, the stone box in which the capstone had been kept collapsed and became a cross with a circumpunct in the center when the Masonic ring was inserted and turned thirty-three degrees. Second, there was lettering on the capstone that glowed when that part of the pyramid was heated to thirty-three degrees, the boiling point on the Newton Scale. Third, when the base part of the



pyramid was boiled the heat caused wax to melt from it revealing more coding etched into its bottom.

All three of these transformations were dependent on the idea that all would be revealed at the thirty-third degree. Katherine and Langdon had taken the phrase at face value believing that the Masons were privy to all Masonic secrets once they reached that level in the organization. Instead, the phrase plays on the multiple meanings of the word degree. Information about the pyramid is revealed when the ring is turned to the thirty-third degree of measurement inside the stone box, and when the pyramid is heated to thirty-three degrees. Remember the shape that the box made when it fell flat as this symbol will be important later in the novel.

Also important in this section is the information given about why the number 33 is of such significance to the Masons. In numerology, 33 was considered the highest of all the Master Numbers. It is said to symbolize the divine truth. This belief in the special powers of the number 33 carried over into Christianity with many of the significant events in the Bible supposedly happening when that person was thirty-three years old.

Although Mal'akh had already tricked both Katherine and Langdon already in the novel they fall easily for another trick that he plays on them. They are so eager to see Peter alive that they do not hesitate when a female security guard tells them over the phone that Peter has been found and he is safe. Langdon again makes the mistake of not insisting on talking to Peter personally to verify their safety before going to Mal'akh's house. Instead of finding their friend being cared for by medics, Katherine and Langdon walk into a trap prepared for them by Mal'akh.

Notice that while others believe there is some threat to the people of the world by revealing the Ancient Mysteries, Galloway believes the time may be right for those mysteries to be revealed. He has seen how badly people claiming to be Christians have misused God's word and the beauty of Jesus' sacrifice. He prays for enlightenment to come.

In direct contrast to Galloway's firm belief that a new spiritual enlightenment will come to the people, Mal'akh is one of the people who have used the tenements of religion in the wrong way. He prepares for a sacrifice that will be unholy and unnecessary. Instead of hoping for enlightenment, Mal'akh hopes for the people to remain in darkness.

Interesting in this section is the possibility that the CIA is somehow connected to the Masons through the information found on the CIA's website about pyramids and ancient portals. Both Nola and Rick are surprised when a hacker tried to hack into a document on the CIA website that contained information that one might search if looking for information about the Masonic pyramid. One has to wonder if perhaps the CIA is not trying to keep something from going public about its affiliations with the Masons.

As the reader tries to keep track of whose side characters appear to be working on, there is a drastic switch of allegiances in this section on the part of Bellamy. From his entrance in the story Bellamy had been very against giving the CIA any information



about the pyramid. He refused to work with the CIA and would not even allow Langdon and Katherine to assemble the pyramid. He told them it was unwise to try to solve it, and that protecting its secret was more important even than saving Peter's life. "Now, however, it seemed that Bellamy had switched sides. He and Sato were now prepared to risk the pyramid's secret in hopes of catching this man" (431). The reader knows that Sato showed Bellamy something very shocking when they were alone together in the Jungle. Whatever that was it has had a deep impact on Bellamy to the point that he has completely changed his mind about the protection of the pyramid's secrets.

A bit of interesting word history shared in this section is the real meaning of the word "sincerely." Galloway uses it as a code to make Peter understand that those trying to decipher the pyramid had not yet reached its full meaning. As he was examining the pyramid after it had been in the boiling water he noticed text on it that had not been there at first. A "sincere" piece of art was one where no wax had been used to hide flaws. Galloway depends on Peter to understand that Langdon and Katherine had not yet seen the codes unveiled when the wax on the pyramid melted.

Discussion Question 1

Since Mal'akh has already tricked Katherine and Langdon once, why do you think they fall so easily for the information they get on the phone from the security guard?

Discussion Question 2

In what ways does the pyramid transform itself? What do these transformations mean?

Discussion Question 3

Why is Sato so angry with Langdon and Katherine for working against her? Would it not be easier for her to show them whatever she showed Bellamy that made him start being more cooperative than just continuing to fight against them? What does it mean that she does not show them what she has in her possession?

Vocabulary

epiphany, servitude, polarity, garth, amorphous, disparate, gradients, turbulent, ramifications, portentous



Chapters 96-107

Summary

In Chapter 96, Mal'akh crushed the CIA agent's radio and cell phone before he picked up the pyramid and examined it briefly. He put the pyramid back in Langdon's bag with a promise to himself to investigate it more thoroughly later. As he listened to the voices on the television recite the Lord's Prayer he wondered if the people knew the basis for that prayer had come from pagan sources. He had learned through his study of the dark Arts that prayer was heard both by forces of good and also by forces of evil. He considered that he was counting on the forces of evil to grant him a great transference of power when he made his final sacrifice that night.

Mal'akh thought about how the human race had a great time of enlightenment in ancient Egypt. Eventually, this enlightenment was destroyed by greed, hatred, and other sins. In order to advance personally, the light Arts were corrupted and people began practicing dark art. Those who still understood the light hid knowledge from those who wanted to use it for evil. Through time, the forces of light and dark still battled against each other. He notes how even Christianity was dependent on sacrifice. In modern times dark arts still depend upon blood sacrifice.

In Chapter 97, Nola called Sato with the information that there was no building located at eight Franklin Square. When she searched the words "the order" and "Franklin Square" she found a building that was designed for and by "an ancient secret order" (454).

In Chapter 98, Langdon woke trapped in a coffin-like box. He feared he had been buried alive. His claustrophobia, which began when he was a child trapped in a well, took over. Katherine, meanwhile, was still laying on the dining room floor. The man who had killed her family came and picked her up. He took her into his concealed space in his basement. He told her that he hoped she would be as impressed by his science as he was by hers.

In Chapter 99, Sato asked Simkins if he could see a building, the Almas Shrine Temple from where he was positioned. When he said he could she asked him to keep a close eye on it for activity. It served as the headquarters for the Shriners, a group associated with the Masons. Sato also confirmed that Simkins had heard nothing from Hartmann, the agent who had been sent with Katherine and Langdon.

In Chapter 100, Mal'akh pulled the rag from Katherine's mouth just as she was about to lose consciousness. He had set her on a chair in a small room outside his main sacrificial room. She saw the pile of Langdon's clothes and asked what Mal'akh had done with Langdon. Mal'akh motioned to a black fiberglass box. When Katherine indicated he would suffocate Mal'akh pointed out pipes leading to the box that allowed air to be pumped inside.



Langdon could faintly hear voices and called out. He recognized Katherine's voice. At the same time he felt a breeze of air and noticed a vent in the box. Just as he began to relax, Langdon heard the sound of liquid coming into the box. Mal'akh told Katherine that drowning was a terrible way to die, as Trish could tell her. He mentioned he had almost drowned the night her mother died.

In Chapter 101, Katherine promised they would do whatever Mal'akh wanted if he would let Langdon go. She told him there were agents waiting for him at Franklin Square as well as the address to the location on that street. He asked her about the meaning of the symbols on the base of the pyramid, symbols she knew nothing about. Katherine was bewildered when Mal'akh showed her the bottom of the pyramid. What she saw was a jumble of symbols from a variety of mystical traditions. She described what she saw as chaos. He decided to ask Langdon about the symbols and slid open a window on the box. Langdon promised to try to decode the symbols on the bottom of the pyramid. When Mal'akh held the pyramid up to the window

In Chapter 102, Langdon had to admit to himself that he had no idea what the collection of symbols on the bottom of the pyramid meant. He believed he was looking at total chaos. As the water continued to rise Langdon tried to focus on coming up with some sort of explanation for the symbols. He could hear Katherine begging for his release. He did not think the Shriner had anything to do with the Ancient Mysteries because the Shriners had not come into existence until after the Pyramid had been created. As the liquid filled his ears the last words he heard from Katherine were "The secret hides within" (472) a phrase Langdon knew he had heard before. It was the main idea of the Ancient Mysteries, that the answers did not have to be sought from God but were contained within the mind of man. Langdon suddenly understood the message on the capstone. Even as he tried to signal to Mal'akh that he knew the answer, Mal'akh would not let him out before he told the answer. Langdon yelled to Mal'akh the answer just before the liquid filled the tank. Mal'akh did not let him out, only told him that he hoped he enjoyed the afterlife.

In Chapter 103, before Langdon drowned, he saw Katherine's face above him. Mal'akh was making her watch as Langdon died.

In Chapter 104, Katherine was in shock when she realized Langdon was dead. Mal'akh picked her up, took her into his altar room and lay her on the stone. He removed her bonds but strapped her to the table. He left her alone in the room and she looked at the strange objects in the room. When she saw the items he had collected for that evening sacrifice, he wondered what he was going to do to her.

In Chapter 105, Nola and Parrish studied the document that Trish and Mark had tried to access off the CIA's server. Parrish had researched why there was anything on the CIA's server about pyramids and hidden portals. He explained it had been created by the CIA director. Meanwhile, Sato and Simkins decided it was time to give up on Mal'akh coming to Franklin Square. They were concerned about Hartmann because he still had not checked in. Field support could not find Hartmann but his Escalade was still parked at the house in Kalorama Heights.



In Chapter 106, as he sat down at his laptop, Mal'akh wondered how long it would take officers to find Langdon's corpse. Mal'akh was searching for a magic square called the Order Eight Franklin Square. As he filled in the square with the symbols in the proper order he believed they began to make sense. When he looked at the completed square, he understood where he was supposed to go. Mal'akh believed it was destiny because the place the pyramid pointed to was the place where Mal'akh has always imagined he would make his final sacrifice.

In Chapter 107, as Katherine lay on the table and wondered if she was about to die she thought about experiments she had done on the human soul. She believed the soul was a physical part of a person that did exist. She created a piece of equipment to measure the weight of a person before and after death. She also found a man who was on the brink of death who was willing to participate in her experiment. When the man died, his body weight decreased by a miniscule, but measurable amount. It had given her and Peter hope that there was some form of life after death.

Mal'akh entered the room, pushing Peter in a wheelchair. He told her that he had only brought Peter to say goodbye, that Peter had an honorable role to fill that evening. Mal'akh showed Katherine and Peter the knife he intended to use later that evening. He collected his sacrificial items and put the bag in Peter's lap. After he was finished, he put a needle in her vein, allowing her blood to leak onto the table. Mal'akh told Peter that if he cooperated, Katherine would be saved, but if he did not, she would die. He put the gag back in Katherine's mouth and wheeled Peter out of the room. A few minutes later she heard a car start.

Analysis

The reader learns the reasoning behind the Masons' decision to hide the Ancient Mysteries from the unworthy in this section of the novel. Additional information describes who is considered to be unworthy. These unworthy people were those who were using the knowledge of the Ancient Mysteries for their own individual benefit and profit instead of for the good of society as a whole. The unworthy had also learned they could call upon power from the dark spirits as well as the spirits of light. In order to stop this misuse of knowledge, the Masons had believed they were doing good by keeping this knowledge away from people who could use it incorrectly. This explains why Mal'akh wants the information hidden in the Ancient Mysteries so badly. He wants to use the power associated with this knowledge to make a sort of demonic god out of himself.

This idea of hiding knowledge so that it cannot be used to further evil advances the theme of the conflict between good and evil in the novel. Mal'akh has realized that the gods of evil are just as strong as the gods of goodness. "Mal'akh had learned long ago that through proper application of the Art, a practitioner could open a portal to the spiritual realm. The invisible forces that existed there, much like man himself, came in many forms, both good and evil. Those of Light healed, protected, and sought to bring order to the universe. Those of Dark functioned oppositely . . . bringing destruction and



chaos” (449). Mal’akh decides to use the power of the dark Art in order to give power to himself and his desire to create pain and chaos, particularly in the case of his family who he believes abandoned him.

In this section, Mal’akh’s thoughts center on the idea of the necessity of a blood sacrifice. Even Christians have at the center of their religion the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Those who believe in the dark Arts have continued to make sacrifices over the years. Mal’akh gives the impression he intends to make a blood sacrifice that night. He leaves the question in the reader’s mind of whether he will be the one sacrificed or if he plans on sacrificing Peter.

Notice the importance of recurring phrases in this section. As above, so below. The secret hides within. Order out of chaos. All of these are phrases that are repeated throughout the novel. Many of them are keys to understanding what the pyramid has to say. As above, so below is a phrase that indicates a connection between heaven and Earth, God and man. As the television congregation recites the Lord’s Prayer Mal’akh notes the reference to this idea in that prayer. “. . . On earth as it is in heaven . . .’ the group intoned. Yes, Mal’akh thought. As above, so below” (448).

The next two phrases — The secret hides within and Order out of chaos — are interconnected. Peter had promised Langdon that the capstone to the pyramid was a talisman that would bring order out of chaos. Up until the just before he drowned, Langdon doubted the ability of the phrase on the capstone to bring order out of anything. When he looked at the jumble of symbols from different time periods that were etched on the bottom of the pyramid he only saw chaos with no hope of order. As he struggled to come up with something to appease Mal’akh Langdon could only think that the Ancient Mysteries were taunting him as the phrase “the secret hides within” continued to haunt his mind. Leaving out the punctuation he realized the capstone was referring to using an Order Eight Franklin Square to decode the message on the bottom of the pyramid.

The knife appears again as an important symbol in this section of the novel. Peter recognizes the knife even though Katherine only sees it as an element of torture. The author still has not given the reader all the information needed to identify its role in history but it can be assumed it was used as part of a well-known sacrifice.

In reference to Langdon’s drowning, notice strange references that surround Mal’akh’s intentions. For instance, before Mal’akh took Katherine into the room where Langdon was in the box Mal’akh mentioned to her that he hoped she liked his science. This insinuates there is more to Langdon’s “death” than just a simple drowning. Drowning a person does not seem like it would qualify as science. Notice also that the liquid that surrounds Langdon is most often referred to as a liquid and very rarely as water. The liquid is also body temperature. It is strange that a torturer would be considerate enough to make the water in which he intended to drown somebody comfortably warm.



Discussion Question 1

Discuss the idea that the soul has weight. How might this make a person feel more hopeful about life after death? What else might account for this change in weight Katherine discovered at death?

Discussion Question 2

Do you think Mal'akh really drowned Langdon? If so, why? What would he have done if Langdon had not come up with the answer to the pyramid before he drowned?

Discussion Question 3

Do you think Mal'akh plans to sacrifice Peter or himself? Give reasons for your answer.

Vocabulary

carnage, trepidation, neophytes, hubris, vociferously, aura, visceral, appendant, dubious, disparate, ethereal, catatonic, solace



Chapters 108-116

Summary

In Chapter 108, Langdon felt as if he were "pure consciousness."

In Chapter 109, Simkins and his crew in the CIA helicopter landed at the house on Kalorama Heights. They saw Agent Hartmann in the floor of the foyer and began a full search of the home. When they found the strangled security guard Simkins realized that Katherine and Langdon had walked into a trap. There were no other bodies found in the rest of the house.

Sato and Bellamy arrived. Simkins noticed Bellamy still looked shell shocked from whatever Sato had shown him. Inside the house, Sato was upset when she discovered that Mal'akh had taken his laptop computer with him. She insinuated to Simkins that Mal'akh had information that no one needed to see.

Although Katherine had heard the helicopter land, there was no way she could signal for help. Meanwhile, Langdon and his mind floated through a void. He wondered if this was all there was to death. He began recalling painful memories.

In Chapter 110, Sato had asked the agents to prepare to leave the house but when she went back into the living room she noticed Simkins on his hands and knees. He had noticed wheel tracks in the rug that led straight to a painting on the wall. Simkins felt of the painting and discovered that it was fixed to the wall but he located a lever that caused the painting to swing out, like a door. A metal door stood beyond the opening. Meanwhile, Langdon heard Mal'akh chanting in his mind as well as a bell tolling.

In Chapter 111, Langdon remembered a lecture of Peter's in which he referred to the words "verbum significatium" (509) the same words he heard Mal'akh chanting in his mind. Peter was excited about the idea that a single word had the power to being a rekindling of learning and scholarship in their country. He additionally had discussed with his students the meaning of the word apocalypse, which he indicated meant an unveiling.

In Chapter 112, Katherine heard an explosion just as she was on the brink of consciousness. She was found and a medic began to tend to her. He asked her where Mal'akh had gone. Katherine told him that Mal'akh had gone to the sacred mountain.

Meanwhile, Sato saw the box in which Langdon had been drowned. When she opened the sliding window on the box, Langdon saw the light. He also saw Sato as she looked down at him and wondered if he was seeing God. Sato recognized that Langdon was not dead but was in a sensory deprivation tank. She was also familiar with the way it could be used as a torture device not only because the person truly believed he was drowning but also because the waking process and return to normal sensation was painful.



Sato tried to make the process as easy as possible for Langdon by turning off the lights and getting blankets in preparation for his awakening. When Langdon had suffered through the pain of “birth” and had the liquid cleared from his lungs, he began to realize what was happening that night.

In Chapter 113, Sato explained to Langdon how the sensory deprivation tank had worked. Langdon had no doubt that was what Mal’akh was referring to when he said that Peter was in purgatory. Sato led him down the hall to the room where Katherine was still laying on the stone table. She was crying. He called out to her and she seemed shocked to see him alive. She sat up and hugged him, and then told him that Peter was alive.

Because the CIA needed to know where Mal’akh had taken Peter, Langdon tried to access his memory of the bottom of the pyramid. As Sato looked for an Order Eight Franklin Square Langdon investigated Mal’akh’s sacrifice room and realized the man was looking for a single word. He had always thought the Ancient Mysteries would encase volumes of material. As Langdon looked at the tattooed man’s research he realized the man was looking for a verbum significatum, or the Lost Word.

In Chapter 114, Peter and Mal’akh arrived at the Masonic House of the Temple. On the elevator Mal’akh pushed the button to take them to the top floor. Meanwhile Langdon struggled to remember all of the symbols he had seen on the pyramid. He did finally remember an “H” in the first row, which he associated with Heredom, the code name for the Masonic House of the Temple in Washington.

In Chapter 115, looking at his own copy of the Order Eight Franklin Square, Mal’akh believed it told him that the Lost Word could be found in this temple. He believed since Katherine’s life lay in the balance that Peter would be willing to help him. When the elevator stopped he and Peter were in the Temple Room, the same place where Mal’akh had been initiated into the highest ranks of the Masons.

Meanwhile, Langdon explained to the CIA agents that there was no single Lost Word. He believed it was a symbol that referred to the Ancient Mysteries and one’s ability to understand these mysteries. Katherine worried that her brother would not be able to give Mal’akh the word and save his life. Langdon assured her that Peter would come up with a word for the man in order to save his sister. An agent met them in the living room of Mal’akh’s house. He was holding a blond wig. The wig had a camera and battery pack incorporated into it. Sato knew it was that wig that had played an important role in the crisis the CIA was facing. She asked agents to search the house and find out what sort of computer and Internet equipment Mal’akh had.

Before leaving, the CIA agents questioned Bellamy and Langdon about the building and the best way to get in. Langdon insisted on coming along because he could show them the quickest way to the Temple Room. Bellamy agreed with him and Sato relented and allowed him to go.



In Chapter 116, Mal'akh grew more and more excited as he prepared for his sacrifice. Mal'akh removed Peter's gag and told him that he would send an ambulance for Katherine after Peter told him the location of the staircase that led to the Lost Word. Although Peter insisted there was no secret staircase in the building Mal'akh continued to push for a location. He showed Peter the image that had been created using the symbols from the bottom of the pyramid. When he saw the image, Peter realized that the man has misunderstood what he was seeing. Since Peter refused to tell Mal'akh what Mal'akh thought he knew, Mal'akh began arranging his ceremonial items on the table. Peter told Mal'akh he was not afraid to die. He also believed he had nothing left to lose since Mal'akh had taken his entire family from him. Mal'akh indicated there was one more thing he could take from Peter.

Analysis

Another facet of myth appears in this section of the novel. The reader learns that Mal'akh believes there is some specific Lost Word that he needs to learn from Peter that he must write on his head before he will be the perfect sacrifice. Mal'akh believes it is the location of this single word that the Pyramid hides. If Mal'akh has interpreted the grid, the Order Eight Franklin Square, that he compiled correctly, his assumption that the word is buried somewhere under the Masons' Temple is correct. Peter, however, assures Mal'akh that there is no winding staircase or lost words hidden beneath the temple.

In fact, Peter is shocked that Mal'akh believes there is a real staircase. "The myth of the staircase was purely symbolic . . . part of the great allegories of Masonry. The Winding Staircase, as it was known, appeared on the second-degree tracing boards. It represented man's intellectual climb toward the Divine Truth" (535-536). It is surprising that since Mal'akh did go through all the stages of the Mason program and learned these things that he did not grasp the idea of the staircase. When Mal'akh shows Peter his tattooed back it is apparent the importance of the staircase struck him since there is a winding staircase that makes its way up his spine.

Notice Sato's agitation when the agents show her the wig they found in Mal'akh's dressing room. This wig has a video and audio recorder embedded in it giving Mal'akh the ability to record footage whenever he wore the wig. Sato is also upset when she learns that Mal'akh has taken his laptop computer with him. The reader must wonder how these two items are connected and why Sato would be so concerned about either of them.

Legend is another aspect upon which the things that happen in this section are clearly situated. While Langdon was in the sensory deprivation tank he remembered Mal'akh chanting the words "verbum significatium" (503). When he got a chance to look at the collection of papers and research in Mal'akh's altar room, Langdon realized that Mal'akh was looking for a secret word. "Langdon most definitely did not believe in the power of magic words . . . and yet it seemed pretty clear that the tattooed man did" (522). Langdon believes Mal'akh is giving an old legend too much credit. Even if he did believe



there was some buried treasure somewhere, Langdon believes it is more than just a single word.

This idea of the "verbum significatium", however, does fit in with the legend of the Ancient Secrets. As the girl in Peter's lecture reads: "Legend holds that the verbum significatium is buried deep underground, where it waits patiently for a pivotal moment in history . . . a moment when mankind can no longer survive without the truth, knowledge, and wisdom of the ages. At this dark crossroads, mankind will at last unearth the Word and herald in a wondrous new age of enlightenment" (509). Just as this word is being withheld until mankind can live without it no longer, so it is said that the Ancient Mysteries are being withheld. All indications in the novel point to the idea that the time is right for a rebirth of knowledge. Not only is Katherine's findings in her research about the human mind a set of new findings that might usher in this new age of knowledge, but note also how seriously Mal'akh felt about his need to destroy Katherine's work. He believed her research was the beginning of a new renaissance as well.

Discussion Question 1

What do you think it is that Mal'akh believes he can take from Peter? Give reasons for your answer.

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the practice of sensory deprivation. How might this process of death and rebirth affect a person? How does Langdon describe his process of coming back to the world after being submersed in this tank?

Discussion Question 3

Do you think the world stands ready for a rebirth of learning? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

abyss, canticle, contentious, viscous, physiology



Chapters 117-125

Summary

In Chapter 117, Langdon and Sato continued to clash over the objective of their mission. While Langdon wanted to save Peter, Sato insisted she had another, more important goal. Sato decided it was time to show Langdon the same thing she had shown Bellamy in order to get his cooperation. The first image that Langdon saw was of Mal'akh, dressed for his first initiation service with the Masons. Next there was footage of the actual initiation. Langdon could tell that Mal'akh had edited the video to give the worst impression of the Masons possible. The video also included the mimed attack of the new initiate resulting in his death because he would not give up the secrets of the Masons, it was a replay of the death of Hiram Abiff. The video also included footage of Mal'akh's induction into the thirty-third degree. The prominent people there included the director of the CIA, as well as the director of Homeland Security.

Langdon understood Sato's concern after watching the video. He knew that if it became public that no one would understand what they were watching but that they would jump to conclusions. It could cause chaos and outcry on a global scale.

In Chapter 118, Mal'akh told Peter that if he did not cooperate that he would destroy the brotherhood of the Masons as well as Peter's biological family. He showed Peter the same video that Langdon had viewed. In order to get Peter to cooperate more fully, Mal'akh sent an email containing the video to major media sources. Because it was such a large file, Mal'akh told Peter it would take a few minutes to be distributed, time that Peter could use to direct him to the Last Word. Mal'akh promised that he would stop the download -- if Peter gave him what he wanted

At the same time, Sato was taking a call from Nola telling her it was too late to stop the transmission of the file if Mal'akh had already started it. She suggested that they use the electromagnetic-pulse gun on the helicopter to fry the laptop.

As Peter continued to stare at the grid of characters, he realized he knew their real significance. Peter told Mal'akh what he wanted to know and Mal'akh believed it was true. Once he saw the answer Mal'akh did not understand how he had missed it.

Back at the Mal'akh's house, Katherine was feeling stronger. She went to look for Bellamy and found him engrossed in the contents of a drawer of Mal'akh's desk. When she called his name he quickly closed the drawer but she could see tears and signs of grief on his face. He told Katherine he had just discovered why Mal'akh hated the Solomon family so much.

In Chapter 119, Mal'akh continued his sacrificial ritual. With Peter's blood he drew the symbol Peter had given him on his head. Peter asked him to do what he had promised; send help to Katherine and stop the video from being sent. Mal'akh indicated they were



not finished yet. He showed Peter the knife again. He said it was rumored to be the knife that Abraham used when he almost sacrificed his son on Mount Moriah. As Mal'akh described the power of sacrifice, Peter asked if Mal'akh considered him a sacred offering.

Mal'akh did not plan to sacrifice Peter but instead himself. He explained a man had to offer what was most precious to him. In Mal'akh's case, that was his body. Mal'akh put the knife in Peter's left hand and told Peter to consider killing him as his final punishment. Peter did not understand the statement until Mal'akh asked Peter how he could look his own son in the eyes and not recognize him. He told Peter that when he heard how Peter had chosen to leave him in jail he had decided that he, as Zachary, would cease to exist.

Meanwhile, as Katherine looked at the contents of the drawer she could see the man was clearly obsessed with her family since he had collected various newspaper articles about them. It was when she saw the pictures that she understood. One of them was dated after Zachary had died in prison. The others showed the same man as he got older and was transformed by steroid use and tattoos.

In Chapter 120, in the parking lot of the Temple, Simkins verified with Langdon that the Temple Room was at the top. Langdon added the flat area at the top of the building was a skylight. Simkins relayed this information to Sato who told her pilot to take the helicopter up.

In Chapter 121, Mal'akh ordered Peter to finish the job he had started. While Mal'akh continued to goad his father into killing him, Langdon and the agents had made their way to the Grand Staircase that led to the Temple Room. Mal'akh reminded Peter of all of the things that Mal'akh had done to him. Peter raised the knife and screamed. When Langdon heard the scream he believed he was too late, that Peter had been killed. He ran into the room even though Simkins told him to wait. Lying on the altar, Mal'akh was surprised because there had been no pain when the knife entered his body. He heard a terrible vibration and the room began to shake. Mal'akh knew the time for his transformation had arrived.

Langdon tackled the man with the knife. He saw the man on the altar illuminated by the helicopter above and noticed the tattoos on the skin. A broken knife lay on the altar. When he saw the bandage on the arm of the man he had just tackled, Langdon realized he had just tackled Peter. He saw a gun aiming at them through the skylight. Behind him the laptop hissed but Langdon noticed before the screen went black that there was a message stating the download was 100 percent complete.

Meanwhile, when the helicopter pilot tried to lift the helicopter from the building one of its struts hit and broke the window. At first, Mak'akh admired the white light and what he thought were jewels falling toward him. Then he felt pain. He realized the white light was just a helicopter. He looked down at the glass that had impaled his body.



In Chapter 122, Mal'akh knew his sacrifice had gone wrong. Peter walked up to Mal'akh. He told him that the symbol, the circumpunct, he had written on his head had not been the last word. He tried to explain that if he had told Peter what the last word really was Mal'akh would not have believed him or understood what he was telling him. Peter added that wherever Mal'akh was going, he wanted him to know that he had been loved. His father was compassionate, an response to the situation that confused Mal'akh. When he died, he entered a dark abyss and was filled with fear.

In Chapter 123, at the National Cathedral, Galloway felt as if a weight had lifted. Bellamy called him to let him know that Peter was okay. Bellamy also told Galloway he believed that Langdon had solved the Masonic Pyramid. He was not sure if the pyramid had shown what the legends said it would.

In Chapter 124, Katherine was stunned by what she saw in the Temple Room. She ran to her brother wanting to know he was okay. She knew the man on the altar was Zachary. When she met Langdon's eyes, he seemed to tell her that Peter knew it was his son. She held Peter as he cried. Meanwhile, Sato received a call from Nola. To her knowledge, the video that Mal'akh had made had not been circulated.

In Chapter 125, Katherine met Langdon in the hallway of the temple. She told him that Peter had told her good news that she wanted to check out for herself. Meanwhile, Peter wanted to talk to Langdon alone in the library. Once he arrived, Peter was sitting at a desk with the Pyramid in front of him.

Analysis

Sacrifice is a central idea in this section of the novel. Mal'akh believes after the preparation he had done that when he sacrifices himself he will be welcomed by the demons as some sort of hero or redeemer for the things he has done to discourage the spread of knowledge. He recognizes the power of sacrifice but not its intent. As the video Mal'akh made of the Masonic rituals even points out, sacrifice is a symbol of submission to a Higher Power. Mal'akh is not being submissive but instead appears to be trying to transform himself into a higher power.

The knife, finally identified as the Akedah Knife, is symbolic in many ways. Mal'akh should take a lesson from its story. Abraham was commanded by God to sacrifice his only son Isaac. Because Abraham did what was asked of him, God stopped Abraham and provided an animal to sacrifice just in time. The knife was not used for sacrifice because God stopped Abraham. He saw how far Abraham would go to be obedient and did not take the thing that meant the most to him. When Peter holds the knife in his hand, he finds he cannot use it to kill his son regardless of the pain that Mal'akh has caused him and his family. Instead of plunging the knife into Mal'akh, Peter slams it into the stone altar, breaking it.

As Peter treats Mal'akh with compassion, even after all that Mal'akh has done to him and his family, Mal'akh is confused. He has given himself over to evil so long that he no



longer understands the concepts of forgiveness and compassion. He did not realize that his father was a man who was at the end of his rope trying to do his best for a child who seemed determined to ruin his own life. Before Mal'akh dies, Peter tells his son that what ever the after life has in store for him, Mal'akh was loved.

Myths and legend again play an important part in Mal'akh's actions because he has acquired the knife he believed was used by Abraham when he was ordered to sacrifice Isaac. The Masons revered the story because it spoke of Abraham's faithfulness to God even when he was asked to do something painful. Mal'akh is using the knife for a cause other than its meaning to the Masons. He believes that he will be the one to reveal true power when he is sacrificed by the knife. When Mal'akh reminds his father of the story behind the knife he is surprised when his father refers to it as a legend. "Legend? The account appears in Holy Scripture. You don't believe it's true?" (556). Not only does Mal'akh seem surprised that his father doubts the truth of the story, but he is also interpreting it the wrong way. He is using the knowledge found in the Bible to promote his own desires, an example of the reason why the illuminated wanted to keep the ignorant away from the Ancient Mysteries.

The pyramid and the code engraved on it continues to be a major point of interest in this section. As Peter stares at the grid he believes that he has determined the real location of the Lost Word, or Ancient Mysteries. When Bellamy calls Galloway to let him know that everything was all right, Bellamy also tells the old priest that he believes that Langdon solved the pyramid's final code. Galloway asks Bellamy, "And tell me, did Langdon discover whether or not the pyramid kept its promise? Whether or not it revealed what legend always claimed it would reveal?" (577). Bellamy does not have an answer for the man. The reader, also, is not sure if Langdon really understands what the grid showed him.

The threats that Mal'akh made to the Masons show how strong that group is in protecting its secrets. This, in turn, indicates that they believed the secrets they protect are really worth their lives. It was Bellamy's discovery that Mal'akh had made such a blatantly despicable video of the Masonic rituals that made him decide to cooperate with the CIA. He realized at that point that the CIA was the only organization that had the power to intercept what Mal'akh was planning to do. Even when he fears for his life, believes that Mal'akh is going to kill him, Peter gives Mal'akh incorrect information about the Ancient Secrets. He understands what Mal'akh is wanting to do and knows he will not understand the truth.

Discussion Question 1

Do you think Zachary's story would have ended any differently if his father had paid the money to get him out of jail? Do you think Peter was right to leave him there? Give reasons to support your answer.



Discussion Question 2

After all the ways in which Peter has disappointed Mal'akh and the many things that Mal'akh has done to hurt Peter, why do you think Mal'akh trusts that Peter will give him the correct word to write on his head?

Discussion Question 3

In what ways is Mal'akh an example of a person who would incorrectly use the knowledge given to him by the Ancient Mysteries?

Vocabulary

innocuous, macabre, volition, ultimatum, prodigal, fetishist, morphing, pinnacle, palpable, transpired



Chapters 126-133

Summary

In Chapter 126, Peter told Langdon that the word was real, not just a legend. Peter laid the grid of symbols that Langdon had reorganized. He told Langdon that when he was at the point he believed he was going to die and had studied the grid he believed that it pointed to the very place where the Lost Word was stored. Reading the grid as a map, Peter told Langdon he believed the location of the Lost Word was due south of where they were located. He added that the letters in the third row of the grid were engraved on that stone of the place he had in mind. Because of what Langdon had gone through, Peter told his friend he believed he had earned the right to learn where the Lost Word was buried. Before they left to go to this secret place, Peter made Langdon put on a blindfold.

In Chapter 127 Parrish showed Nola the Kryptos, a sculpture that was connected to Masonic mystery. There was a message written on the Kryptos in code that fascinated those who tried to translate it. The file that the hacker had been looking for had been about the Kryptos and it was posted on the CIA's employee discussion board. Nola asked Parrish if he thought perhaps Kryptos and the Masonic Pyramid were hiding the same secret.

In Chapter 128 as they reached their destination, Peter asked Langdon to leave behind his doubt just for a moment and try to believe what Peter was about to tell him was true. When Peter finally let Langdon take off his blindfold, they were standing in a completely dark room. Peter turned on his flashlight and pointed it down, illuminating a staircase. Peter promised to take him to the bottom of the staircase but wanted him to see something else first. He showed him a tiny window and asked him to look out. Langdon was shocked when he saw the illuminated top of the Capitol Building, and realized he was in the observation deck of the Washington Monument.

In Chapter 129, Langdon realized that what Peter had told him was true. There was the capstone, a massive stone, under which was a winding staircase. The apex of the monument was a pyramid the size of the Masonic Pyramid. Langdon also realized that the symbols in the third row of the grid were intended to be interpreted as the letters they looked like. Read this way, the grid said *Laus Deo*, the same words engraved on the top of the Washington Monument. The words translate to "praise God."

Peter reminded Langdon that people sometimes buried items inside the capstones of important buildings. When Langdon suggested that Peter thought the Lost Word was buried in the capstone, Peter told him that he knew it was. Historical documents prove that the "The Lost Word was buried in the cornerstone of this monument on July 4, 1848, in a full Masonic ritual" (609). Langdon admitted he still had trouble understanding that a single word could be that powerful. Peter laughed and told him that it was not a single word, but instead the name for what the ancients called what was buried.



Chapter 130 begins with the scripture “In the beginning was the Word” (610). Galloway prayed for America. He prayed the people of the country would come to realize the power of the Word, also known in Christianity as the Bible.

In Chapter 131 Langdon and Peter wound their way down the staircase inside the Washington Monument. Peter explained to Langdon that the Bible has lasted so long because it hid powerful secrets and untapped knowledge. He listed scholars through the years who had been infatuated with studying the Bible. When Langdon next asked why the teachings of the Bible were shrouded in code and not written plainly Peter explained it was because the powerful knowledge could fall into the wrong hands. Seeing that Langdon was confused, Peter told him that the Ancient Mysteries and the Bible were the same thing.

Peter believed the original intention of God was for humans to be creators as He is a creator. The text of the Bible, he said, was revered by Freemasons because it asked the question “Know ye not that ye are gods?” (617). Outside the monument Langdon noticed the Washington Monument looked like a circumpunct from above, a circle within a circle.

In Chapter 132 Katherine told Langdon how happy she was to see for herself that all of her research was safe. Her brother had kept backup files. Bellamy greeted Katherine and Langdon at the Capitol Building. He had been asked by Peter to show the two the building’s best secret.

In Chapter 133 Katherine and Langdon waited on the balcony above the Rotunda. They had instructions to wait until a specific time and then to use the key Bellamy had given them to unlock a door, located up another staircase. As they waited for that time to arrive, Langdon and Katherine talked about the scientific knowledge shared by the Bible.

While some thought of the temple that God instructed people to build as their bodies, Katherine thought of it as the mind. Just as the temple was to be divided into two parts, so was the brain divided into two parts. “A veil of weblike tissue,” (626) she said, divided the two parts of the brain. She also argued that it was not a person’s physical body that was supposed to represent God but instead his mind. When Langdon asked, Katherine told him that she not only believed in miracles but she had also witnessed them.

In the Epilogue, Langdon woke and realized that Katherine had gone up to the door ahead of him. He climbed the narrow staircase and stepped onto the catwalk around the Capitol Dome. They watched the sun rise over the Washington Monument. As Langdon looked at the monument he realized the shape it made with the National Mall was the same shape the box in which the capstone had made when it opened flat. They watched as the point of the monument caught the first rays of the sun and glowed. As he watched the sun rise, Langdon felt hope.



Analysis

Through the course of the novel, Langdon has fought with his inability to suspend his disbelief. Because logic tells him that there cannot be a hidden trove of ancient secrets hidden in Washington, he cannot consider any other option. Peter tries to make his friend understand that even though it does not make logical sense, that the legend of the lost secrets is not a legend. “The ‘word’ you refer to, Robert, is not a legend. It is a reality” (583). He goes on to tell Langdon that he believes that even though Langdon is not a Mason, he has earned the right to know about the location of the Ancient Mysteries, a location that Peter claims that he determined only a short time ago. As Peter takes Langdon to the place of the Ancient Mysteries he challenges Langdon to try to set aside his disbelief. “I want you to believe . . . just for an instant . . . believe in the legend” (601). Peter takes Langdon to the place where he believes the Ancient Mysteries or Lost Word is hidden. When Langdon questions Peter’s belief that there is a copy of the Bible buried in the capstone of the Washington Monument, Peter even offers him historical proof. “The Lost Word was buried in the cornerstone of this monument on July 4, 1848, in a full Masonic ritual” (609).

Kryptos, a sculpture at the CIA headquarters, turns out to be another monument surrounded by questions. Parrish shows Nola this sculpture and tells her that it is the focus of the strange key words she located on the CIA’s website. It has a strange message coded on the front of it that no one has been able to completely decipher. The parts of the message that have been deciphered indicate that there is something buried of which no one knows the exact location. As Nola does further research, it appears the message on Kryptos deals with the location of the pyramid in which Tutankhamen was buried.

Their discussion points to a fear that was central to Sato and the CIA’s interest in Mal’akh’s behavior. They worried that if people saw the video that Mal’akh had made of the Masons and their initiation ceremonies, especially the way that Mal’akh had edited it, it would cause widespread panic and a loss of faith in the leaders of the country. As they discussed Kryptos, Parrish says to Nola: “I figured you’d want to know about the Kryptos forum before you accused the CIA director of harboring classified documentation about an ancient Masonic legend. Somehow I doubt a man as powerful as the CIA director has time for that sort of thing” (597). Nola, who has seen the video that Mal’akh produced and is aware that the CIA director is a member of the Masons, considers how Parrish might react if he knew the truth.

Symbols of hope fill the final chapters of this novel. First, capping off the analogy that has persisted through the book that good and knowledge are light while evil and ignorance are darkness, Peter gives Langdon and Katherine the gift of watching the sun rise over the Washington Monument. The long, cold night is over as the sun peaks over the horizon, giving light and warmth. The light first touches the pyramid shaped object on top of the Washington Monument, the one with the directive to praise God, and lights it up like a shining beacon. When Langdon notices the National Mall is laid out like a cross with the Washington Monument as a circumplex at the intersection he considers



that might actually be the place where the Ancient Mysteries, which Peter has told him is a copy of the Bible, is buried.

There are continued references to the number 33. For instance, the capstone of the Washington Monument weighs 3,300 pounds. Notice the author cannot help but put his own reference to the number 33 in the novel. The final chapter is Chapter 133.

The use of knowledge, particularly the use of Biblical knowledge, is an idea that is discussed in this section as both Katherine and Peter try to convince Langdon that the Bible can relate to science. For instance, Katherine points out to Langdon how the anatomy of the brain is similar to the layout of the temple. She argues that God intends for use to treat our brains as a temple, just as we believe he wants us to treat our bodies as a temple. She also describes God as mental energy, instead of a person or being. She believes that the Bible's reference to how humans were created in God's image refers to how they were created in the image of this mental energy. As such, humans are expected to try to understand and put to use the great power that God has given them.

Discussion Question 1

Do you think that Peter showed Langdon the real location of the Ancient Mysteries? Give reasons to support your answer.

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the symbols mentioned in this section of the novel. In your opinion, what does the similarity between the location of the Washington Monument and the circumpunct in the box mean? Do you think it is just coincidence? Support your opinion.

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the idea that God has made men with the intention that they become creators. Do you agree with this? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

burgeoned, primordial, enigmatic, conspiratorial, acoustics, pinnacle, transliteration, tomes, infantile, iconoclastic, gnostic, fabricated, concentric, caveat, prophetic, lore, derided, pensive, inherent



Characters

Mal'akh aka Zachary Solomon

Since Mal'akh is a man obsessed with transformations. As such, it is no wonder that he has so many identities through the course of this novel. He began his life as Zachary Solomon but changed his name after he heard a conversation between his father and the administration of the foreign prison in which he was being held. Because Zachary's father, Peter, would not buy Zachary's freedom, Zachary used his money to do so. He made it appear that Zachary had been killed.

After his experience in prison, Zachary moved to Greece and changed his name to Andros Dareious. He became obsessed with physical fitness and used steroids and growth hormones to make himself into the perfect male specimen. He soon grew tired of this phase and began yearning for something new. After he saw a documentary on Freemasons, he decided to try to steal the pyramid that his father had offered him when Peter tried to get Zachary to join the Freemasons.

In a failed attempt to steal the pyramid, Peter's mother was shot by Zachary. Peter also followed the robber, whom he did not know was Zachary, to the river where Peter shot the man. It was believed the man died after he fell into the icy river. His body was never located.

Despite this failed attempt, Zachary decided to try again to get the pyramid and the knowledge he believed that it protected. He began researching mysticism and magic when he decided to get a tattoo to cover up the scars the gunshot wounds he suffered, and was soon active in the dark Arts. It was at this point that he changed his name to Mal'akh after the warrior demon Moloch in Milton's Paradise Lost.

At this same time, Mal'akh became a member of the Masons and worked up through the ranks of this organization. He made a large donation in order to ensure his inclusion in the ranks of the thirty-third degree Masons, the highest level of this group. He recorded all of his initiation services using a video device he hid in his hairpiece. These videos were edited to make a propaganda video about the Masons that focused on the disturbing parts of that group and omitted all of the group's ideas about honesty and integrity. The video even caught footage of influential men who were members of the organization, like Senators and the director of the CIA at Mal'akh's initiation services. Mal'akh intended to send this video to major news sources to instill fear of the Masons in American citizens and citizens in other countries.

Mal'akh believed he could earn the respect of the dark forces if he destroyed the knowledge that his Aunt Katherine was amassing about human potential and destroyed the Freemasons who claimed to be protecting ancient knowledge and secrets. His ultimate gift to the demons, he decided, would be the sacrifice of his own body which he believed was a masterpiece.



Mal'akh kidnapped his father and tortured him in order to learn the secrets of the Masons and also to learn the identity of the Lost Word, which Mal'akh needed to write on the top of his own head before his body would be ready for sacrifice. The top of Mal'akh's head was the only non-tattooed part of his body. Mal'akh intended for his father to kill him after he told Peter his true identity. The sacrifice went wrong when Peter refused to strike Mal'akh with the knife. Instead, he jabbed the knife into the stone altar, breaking its blade.

Mal'akh was killed when the CIA's helicopter nicked and broke the skylight above the altar on which Mal'akh was lying. Mal'akh was impaled with pieces of jagged glass. Instead of the joyous reception he expected when he died, Mal'akh was immersed in a place of darkness and fear.

Robert Langdon

Robert Langdon is the main character and hero of this novel. He is a professor at Harvard who teaches classes on religious icons and symbols.

Langdon becomes involved in the action of this story when he is tricked into coming to Washington on the pretenses that his friend, Peter Solomon, needs a speaker at the last minute for a Smithsonian gala. Langdon's role in what Inoue Sato called a situation that could affect national security was fixed when the same man who tricked Langdon into coming to Washington told Sato that Langdon was the only man who could decipher the code on the pyramid.

Langdon struggles with his disbelief in the story of the Masonic Pyramid, even though he was being presented with evidence that the myth was true. Langdon also struggles to believe this pyramid would protect a secret so strong that the Masons would feel more bound to protect it than to protect the lives of their fellow brothers.

As Langdon tries to outrun the CIA, he slowly makes progress on decoding the pyramid. It is not until after he had been kidnapped by Mal'akh and believes the man intends to drown him that Langdon realizes the final key to decode the message that will show the location of the place the Ancient Mysteries were buried.

Langdon did not drown. He was put in a sensory deprivation tank from which members of the CIA rescue him in time for him to see the final showdown between Peter and Mal'akh. Because of his dedication, Peter showed Langdon the place where the Ancient Mysteries were buried. He also rewards Langdon by giving him the chance to see the sun rise over the Washington Monument from the dome of the Capitol Building. This experience reignites Langdon's hope that the light will overcome the forces of evil in the world.



Warren Bellamy

Warren Bellamy is the Architect, or building manager, for the Capitol Building. He is the one who allowed Peter to use a room in the subbasement of that building as a safe place to store the base portion of the Masonic Pyramid. He is a Mason of the thirty-third degree.

When Bellamy learns that Sato, Anderson, and Langdon are on their way to the basement, he hurries to follow them. He injures both Sato and Anderson. Then, he has Langdon put the pyramid in his bag and follow him. To keep the pyramid out of CIA hands, Bellamy splits up from Langdon and Katherine and allows himself to be caught.

Bellamy has told Langdon and Katherine to protect the secret that the pyramid guards. He says to them that it is even more important than Peter's life.

When Bellamy is first questioned by the CIA he refuses to cooperate. After Sato shows him the video that Mal'akh made, Bellamy is stunned and does as he is asked.

While looking through drawers at Mal'akh's house later that night, Bellamy discovers that Mal'akh is actually Peter's son.

Peter Solomon

Peter Solomon is Langdon's mentor, Katherine's brother, and the father of Zachary. Zachary is most often known in this novel as Mal'akh.

Peter is the Worshipful Master of the thirty-third degree of the Masons. He is also the secretary of the Smithsonian Institute. He encourages his sister's experimentation in Noetics by providing her with a lab in the Smithsonian Museum's Support Center.

Since his son, Zachary, died in a foreign prison even though Peter had the opportunity to free him, Peter lives with the guilt of having caused his son's death. Zachary had always been rebellious. At the time, Peter thought he would be teaching the boy a lesson by making him stay in jail.

Peter was shocked ten years later when a bulky tattooed man claimed to be Zachary. Although that man intended to make Peter sacrifice him, Peter could not do so. Instead, he broke the knife that the man gave him by ramming it into the stone altar. Zachary, known as Mal'akh, was surprised that even after the things he had done to his father that Peter offered him compassion.

Inoue Sato

Inoue Sato is the overlord of the CIA's Office of Security. She is of Japanese descent, but she was born in an interment camp in America during the World War II.



She is described as being a tiny woman with a husky voice because she suffered throat cancer from smoking. She still smokes. It is also indicated that she is an “uncompromising patriot as well as a terrifying enemy to any who stood in opposition” (78).

Sato is the member of the CIA who is in charge of the mysteries involving the Masonic Pyramid. She has a copy of the video that Mal’akh intended to use to ruin the reputation of the Masons. Since she knew how people would react to that video, Sato hesitated to show it even to those who needed to understand why she kept insisting that the pyramid and its secrets were matters of concern for national security.

Sato is successful in her mission of keeping the video off the news and preventing a national crisis when people see how many powerful politicians and leaders, including the director of the CIA, are members of that often misunderstood group.

Katherine Solomon

Katherine Solomon is Peter’s sister and Zachary’s aunt. She is a scientist who is studying Noetic Science, a field of science that studies the power of the human mind. She is drawn into the search for the mysteries the pyramid holds when Mal’akh destroys her lab and attempts to kill her.

When she learns that Mal’akh has kidnapped her brother, Katherine does not hesitate to break the seal on the box that contains the capstone of the pyramid in order to try to decode the pyramid’s message and save her brother.

Since she is a scientist, she is the one who realizes the third meaning of the word degree. She reads the phrase “all is revealed at the thirty-third degree” as meaning that the pyramid might give away more of its secrets if it is brought to the temperature of thirty-three degrees, the boiling point on the Newton Scale.

Alfonso Nunez

Alfonso Nunez is the guard who was working at the Capitol’s visitor’s center the night that Mal’akh left Peter’s hand in the Rotunda of that building. In fact, Nunez was the man who checked Mal’akh and determined that he was okay to go into the building. He worried that he would lose his job after that incident, even though it appeared he had checked the man properly before he entered the building.

Later that night, Nunez let Bellamy into the Capitol Building after hours, and he also helped Langdon and Bellamy escape the building. After his role in their escape was discovered, Nunez was let go from his job.



Trent Anderson

Trent Anderson is the chief of police for the Capitol Building. He is the one who joins Sato and Langdon on their trip into the basement of that building to the room set aside for Peter's personal use.

He is at odds with Sato because even though she has a higher rank than his, he feels as if she is encroaching on his territory when she takes over the investigation of Peter's hand.

Anderson is relieved from the case by Sato when she learns that one of his security guards was responsible for helping Bellamy and Langdon escape and that Anderson tried to work with that guard to come up with a cover story.

Reverend Colin Galloway

The Reverend Colin Galloway is the elderly man who is the dean of the Washington National Cathedral. When he receives the call from Bellamy asking if there is no help for the widow's son, Galloway agrees to give refuge to Langdon and Katherine.

For the short time they are able to talk in his office, Galloway, who is blind, shows them the transformative power of the pyramid. He is of the belief that the time might be right for the pieces of the pyramid to be reunited.

After he is separated from Katherine and Langdon, Galloway spends his time praying for his country and for the people's renewed faith in God.

Trish Dunne

Trish Dunne is Katherine's lab assistant. She is killed by Mal'akh, who is dressed as Dr. Abaddon, when he realizes that she would be in the lab with him and Katherine. He intended to be alone when he killed Katherine and destroyed Katherine's work.

Trish is also the one who creates a spider search for Katherine to search the Internet for phrases that would prove the existence of the Masonic Pyramid and the Ancient Mysteries. When she is unable to hack into the IP address that has a page that contains all of these phrases, she suggests that Katherine hire a professional hacker.

Rick Parrish

Rick Parrish is a worker from the CIA's systems security. He is the one who worked Mark's attempt to hack into the CIA computer system. He brings her the strange redacted file that Mark had tried to download. When Nola asked why the CIA would be interested in pyramids and secret staircases, Rick shows her the sculpture, Kryptos, outside the CIA building. People who had tried to translate the encoded phrase on the



sculpture had discovered that it referenced mysterious things like portals leading underground and spiral staircases.

Officer Paige Montgomery

Officer Paige Montgomery is the security guard from Preferred Security who answers the call that Langdon makes to Mal'akh's phone. She tells him that Peter has been found and that he is safe. Langdon and Katherine believe Officer Montgomery is telling the truth, which allows Mal'akh to trap them.

Officer Montgomery is the same guard who responded to the call to Kalorama Heights and was captured by Mal'akh.

Mark Zoubianis

Mark Zoubianis is the geek whom Trish hired to attempt to hack the IP address on which a redacted document containing several keywords was located. Mark was surprised when he received a call from the CIA questioning his intentions after he had been working on the address for only a short while.

Isabel Solomon

Isabel Solomon was Peter and Katherine's mother. She was killed by Zachary, who was then known as Andros, when he broke into their home on Christmas Day in an attempt to steal the Masonic Pyramid from his father. Since Isabel was spunky, she got a shotgun when she realized someone was threatening her family. She hit Zachary with bird shot before she was hit by a bullet from Zachary's gun.

Nola Kaye

Nola Kaye is the senior analyst in the CIA's office of security. She is the one who attempts to break the code on the pyramid. She also is the one in charge of researching and providing information for Sato and the other members of the team while they are out in the field.

The Prison Administrator

The prison administrator at Songalik was suspected of being the one who killed Zachary Solomon. In reality, Zachary arranged with the administrator to have another man who was of Zachary's height and build killed. Zachary promised the administrator money for his help. Instead, Zachary killed him.



Agent Turner Simkins

Agent Turner Simkins is the operation leader in charge of the CIA's investigation of Peter's kidnapping and the strange video that the CIA had received about the Masonic initiations.

Omar Amirana

Omar Amirana is the name of the taxi driver who picked Katherine and Langdon up from in front of the Library of Congress. He recognized them by their description on a news bulletin and contacted the CIA. The driver cooperated with the CIA in an attempt to capture Katherine and Langdon, but they were able to outsmart him.



Symbols and Symbolism

Mickey Mouse Watch

Langdon wears a Mickey Mouse watch that was a gift from his parents on his ninth birthday. He looks at this watch at various times through the evening and lets the reader know how the evening is progressing. The action of the novel takes place within a time frame of about twelve hours. When the guard at the Capitol Building comments on Langdon's youthful looking watch, Langdon comments that he wore it as a sign that he needed to slow down and enjoy life.

Peter's Hand

Peter's right hand was severed from his body and staked so that it would stand straight in the form of the Hand of the Mysteries. Langdon recognizes this Hand of the Mysteries and tells Sato that it was presented as an invitation to acquire sacred knowledge. This hand appears in the novel in Chapter 10.

The Apotheosis of Washington

The Apotheosis of Washington is the name of the painting on the ceiling of the Capitol Building's Rotunda. It is proof that America's forefathers believed that people had the ability to transform themselves into the likeness of God.

The Double Headed Phoenix

The Double Headed Phoenix is an important symbol in the Masons. It is most often used in this novel as an indication that someone is part of that group. For instance, Katherine recognizes that Dr. Abaddon (Mal'akh) is a Mason when she sees a certificate with this symbol on it in his office. Mal'akh also has a double-headed phoenix tattooed on his chest.

The Pyramid

The pyramid is said to be a representation of man's journey to reach the state of enlightenment. The Masonic Pyramid is said to hide the location where the Ancient Mysteries are buried. The pyramid is a central symbol that is mentioned throughout the course of the novel.



Akedah Knife

The Akedah knife is a symbol of sacrifice. This knife is said to be the same knife that Abraham had when he almost sacrificed his son Isaac to God on Mount Moriah. Mal'akh has purchased this famous knife and intends to be sacrificed by it at the hands of his father. This knife first appears in Chapter 81 and is also significant in Chapters 104, 107, and 116.

A Circumpunct

Among its variety of meanings, the circumpunct symbolizes the Ancient Mysteries. It is significant that when the box in which the capstone of the Masonic Pyramid had been stored falls open, it appears to be a cross with a circumpunct in the middle of it. After Langdon has been shown by Peter that the Ancient Mysteries are housed in the capstone of the Washington Monument, Peter realizes that the Monument looks like a circumpunct located in the center of the cross made by the National Mall. This circumpunct appears in Chapter 85 and the Epilogue.

The Cross

Before the cross was a Christian symbol, it was an Egyptian symbol. It represented the place where the human and celestial dimensions intersected. This symbol is created when the box in which the capstone for the pyramid was stored falls flat on the table. The cross is found both in Chapter 85 and the Epilogue of the novel.

The Lost Word

The Lost Word is synonymous with the Ancient Mysteries. Langdon learns near the end of the novel that the Lost Word is symbolic of the Bible.

Winding Staircase

This winding staircase is a symbol of man's journey toward God.



Settings

Pod 5 Smithsonian Museum Support Center

Peter turned a part of this unused pod in the SMSC into a lab for his sister to perform experiments in Noetic Sciences. Since Mal'akh believed that he would be rewarded for destroying the knowledge and proof that Katherine was amassing, he charmed her into letting him come into her lab. Then, he blew up the lab.

The Rotunda at the Capitol Building

It was in the Rotunda of the Capitol Building that Mal'akh left Peter's right hand, shaped and tattooed in the form of the Hand of the Mysteries.

Mal'akh's House in Kalorama Heights

Mal'akh's house in Kalorama Heights was the place where Mal'akh took Peter to torture him after he kidnapped him. It was at this same house where Katherine went to meet Mal'akh, then known as Dr. Abaddon, when he told her there were things about Peter that he believed she needed to know. Later in the novel, Mal'akh tricked Langdon and Katherine into coming to his house where he tortured both of them in an attempt to learn the mysteries of the Masonic Pyramid.

SBB13

SBB13 was the storage room in the lowest level of the Capitol Building where the Unfinished Pyramid is located by Langdon, Sato, and Anderson.

The Library of Congress

The Library of Congress was where Katherine met with Langdon after she escaped from Mal'akh at her lab.

Soganlik Prison

Soganlik Prison was the place where Zachary Solomon was held after he was caught carrying cocaine with him when he tried to cross into Eastern Europe. Zachary's parents believed he died in this prison. However, Zachary paid off the guards to fake his death. He did so because he wanted to get revenge on his father for not paying to get Zachary out of jail.

The Jungle

The Jungle was a rainforest located in the U.S. Botanic Garden. Sato took Bellamy to the rainforest to show him the video that Mal'akh made about the Masons.

Freedom Plaza

Freedom Plaza was the place where Langdon and Katherine pretended to be making an exciting discovery about where the Lost Word was located. They did this to throw off the cab driver when they discovered he was sharing their location with the CIA.

The Washington Monument

The Washington Monument was the place where the Ancient Mysteries, or the Lost Word, were buried beneath a staircase. Peter took Langdon to the monument after Mal'akh had been killed and the threat to the politicians who were Masons had been averted.



Themes and Motifs

Connection Between the U.S. and Masons

A prevalent theme throughout this novel is the connection between the Masons and the founding of America. While many believe America was founded on the idea of religious freedom, it appears the forefathers really had in mind a country in which the people were free to pursue scientific thinking and be open-minded. Proof of the importance the founding fathers put on science as well as the rituals of the Masons can be found in the buildings and artwork of our nation's Capitol city.

As Langdon is on his way to Washington, he thinks about the way that the Masons were instrumental in the design of that city. "This city had been conceived and designed by Master Masons — George Washington, Ben Franklin, and Pierre L'Enfant — powerful minds who adorned their new capital with Masonic symbolism, architecture, and art" (32). The cornerstones of many of the political buildings, like the Capitol Building and the Washington Monument, were laid following Masonic rituals.

Following the Masons' beliefs that the stars and fate were interconnected, the capstones of many of the buildings in Washington were set on precise dates at exact times. For instance, Langdon often told the members of his classes that "the cornerstone was set at that date and time because, among other things, the auspicious Caput Draconis was in Virgo" (36). He argues it was not coincidence because the capstones of the Capitol Building, the White House, and the Washington Monument were all set in "different years but were carefully timed to occur under this exact same astrological condition" (36-37).

The impact of the Masons can also be seen in the repeated use of 33 as a number of distinction. For instance, the stone at the top of the Washington Monument is said to weigh 3,300 pounds. Peter believes it is no coincidence that the huge stone that sits atop the staircase that winds down to the place where the Ancient Mysteries are buried is given a weight in which the most sacred number is included.

Artwork in the capitol city portrays the beliefs of the Masons and helps to decode the messages of the pyramid. According to the novel, it is a well-known legend that the Masons protect Ancient Secrets about how man can go about transforming himself into God. A visual representation of this transformation into God is displayed on the rotunda of the Capitol Building, where George Washington apotheosis is depicted. Additionally, the Melencolia I includes a grid needed to correctly arrange the letters on the side of the Masonic Pyramid. It also depicts the theme of man's struggle to understand the Ancient Secrets.

Since much of this book centers on the secrets of the Masons, the plot would be impossible for the reader to understand without having some background on this group. For this reason, the author includes basic information about the group and its beliefs



throughout the novel to help the reader understand the significance of what is happening. He also teaches the reader about the Masons in a hope that he will dispel some of the rumors about who they are and what they do.

Transformation

The idea that under the right circumstances a person, or even an object, can transform into a different form is central in Langdon's race to decode the Masonic Pyramid. Similarly, Mal'akh is caught up in the idea that a man can transform himself into a god. His idea is similar to the goals of the Masons with the exception that he is trying to turn into a dark god, not the sort of god that George Washington is depicted as having been transformed into on the ceiling of the Capitol Building's Rotunda.

As Langdon and Katherine try to decode the Masonic Pyramid, they are surprised when Galloway tells them that the pyramid has powers of transformation. What he shows them is the ability of the box in which the capstone was stored to transform. When Langdon inserts the Masonic ring and turns it the correct number of arc degrees, the box falls flat. It has transformed itself from a cube to a cross. From this prompting Katherine theorizes if it is brought to the temperature of 33 degrees, the boiling point on the Newton Scale, it will transform. She is right because part of the capstone of the pyramid is made with a substance that glows when it reaches the boiling point. A wax coating is also melted off the base when it reaches the boiling point. This coating of wax had hidden additional symbols carved into the pyramid.

The Masons operate under the idea that man has the ability to transform himself into a god-like state. They believe this can be done through enlightenment. Proof of this idea lies in the painting on the ceiling of the Capitol's rotunda where George Washington is pictured as transforming into a god.

Mal'akh picks up on this belief, but he takes it in a different direction. Instead of transforming himself into a god, Mal'akh decides to take the same principles and transform himself into a god based on the practices of dark Art. He attempts to make a meaningful sacrifice out of his body by abusing it with steroids and growth hormones. He additionally castrates himself and covers his body with tattoos and ancient symbols. He believes the end result is a masterpiece, worthy of acceptance by the gods of underworld. Mal'aki is surprised when his sacrifice is not accepted in the way he believed it would be.

Is Knowledge Good or Evil?

One question raised by this novel is whether knowledge, in itself, is good or evil. This intrinsic value of knowledge is questioned by the Masons as they keep hidden the Ancient Secrets that are said to be able to help a person transform into a god. Katherine also poses this same question when she considers that the results of her research can be used for either good or evil. Mal'akh, meanwhile, has a twisted view of the proper



answer to this question as he strives to destroy knowledge and ensure there will be no reawakening of enlightenment.

The fact that the Masons keep the location of the Ancient Mysteries a secret proves that they believe this information can be dangerous in the wrong hands. As Peter tells Langdon about the Mysteries: “The mysteries are a flaming torch, which, in the hands of a master, can light the way, but which, in the hands of a madman, can scorch the earth” (615-616). The idea seems to be that knowledge in and of itself is not good or bad, but it is what people decide to do with it. Peter indicates there must be a process of shielding this information from people who can use it to do harm.

Similarly, Katherine poses a question to Trish when she first hires her about the value of knowledge. She wants to know if Trish would be able to handle the reality if her creations were used to do evil. In this case, Trish gives Katherine the answer that she is looking for. She basically tells her that a creator cannot be held responsible for the good or the evil that their creations are used to commit.

Interestingly, this question of whether knowledge is good or evil leads to an answer to the paradox that parents face when a child lives an evil life. In this scenario, the parents create the child. They give this child the knowledge they believe will help him to live a fulfilling life. Ultimately, however, the parents cannot be held responsible if the children take what their parents have given them and use it for evil.

Mal’akh is one who chose to take his life and the knowledge he amassed during his life and use it for evil purposes. Even as he strives to make himself into a sort of demonic god, Mal’akh seems to have a god complex. He seems to believe he is somehow worthy of knowing the mysteries of the Ancient Secrets while others in the world are not. In fact, he destroys Katherine’s work with the belief that the answers she would provide to humans would spark a new period of enlightenment. Mal’akh believes his job is to keep the world and its people in the dark.

The novel deals with this question because by keeping the Ancient Mysteries a secret, the Masons are doing the same thing as Mal’akh. They believe that they are worthy of knowing these secrets and that they should be the ones to decide when it is time to unveil them.

Communication Through Veiled Language and Symbols

Along with people and objects, language and symbols also have the ability to be transformed. Over the years, words that once meant one thing now mean another. The same goes with symbols. The secrets of the Masonic Pyramid are hidden beneath the uses of words and symbols in archaic and sometimes multiple meanings.

The one thing in common among the people who discover the secrets of the Masonic Pyramid is that they realize once they solve the mystery, the answer was right there all



along. Take, for instance, the Masons' popular phrase "all is revealed at thirty-three degrees." Since the highest ranking for a Mason is the thirty-third degree, it is common for people to take this phrase at face value and believe that once they are inducted into the thirty-third degree of the Masons, they will know all of the secrets of that group. It turns out this phrase is actually a clue about how to unlock the pyramid's secrets. If the Masonic ring is inserted into the circumpunct in the box that housed the pyramid's capstone, the box falls flat to become a cross with a circumpunct (a circle with a point in the center) at the intersection. It is basically a map of the place where the Ancient Mysteries are located. Langdon notes the Washington Monument looks like a circumpunct, while the National Mall creates a cross. When one takes into consideration that the word degree is also a measurement of temperature, it makes sense that Katherine reasons that the pyramid will give up even more secrets if it is heated to thirty-three degrees on the Newton Scale.

The words on the capstone of the pyramid also show how words can be easily misunderstood based on line breaks. Once Katherine and Langdon have the full text on the capstone of the pyramid it reads "The / secret lies / within The Order / Eight Franklin Square" (485). Since the words "Eight Franklin Square" appeared only when Katherine heated the pyramid, she and Langdon believe that these three words are an entity within themselves. They expect a specific address and believe the words on the capstone have given them one. They discover later "The Order" does not refer to the establishment of the Masons, but instead the order, arrangement, of the symbols carved into the bottom of the pyramid. "The Order Eight Franklin Square" is capitalized to put emphasis on this portion of the message as a full phrase. In order to put the symbols in the correct order, one must use the Order Eight Franklin Square.

Even Langdon's inability to believe that the Masonic Pyramid really exists is tied up in the use of a single word. "Language can be very adept at hiding the truth," Bellamy tells Langdon as he explains to him that the legend of the pyramid refers to the key to reading the text on the figure, not to the story of the pyramid being a myth.

Suspension of Disbelief

At several points in this novel, Langdon is asked to set aside his doubt and believe that the Masonic Pyramid really exists. Since Langdon is an intellectual, he cannot fathom the idea that there is actually a stone covering a staircase that leads to a trove of secret information. If there were, he believes there would be some indication of the location of that information. As more and more proof is provided to Langdon that the myth of the pyramid is true, Langdon still clings to his disbelief. It is not until Peter shows him the exact location of the Ancient Secrets that Langdon finally begins to lose his disbelief.

Just like Katherine is shocked when Mal'akh contacts her and tells her that the Ancient Mysteries in which her brother believes might really exist, Langdon is shocked when he begins coming face-to-face with physical pieces of a story that he had believed to be only a legend. Central to the shock these two characters face is that they both believed the Masonic Pyramid and the tales they had heard about it were only a myth. As



Katherine tries to wrap her head around the idea that the pyramid might really exist, she reasons to herself, “Sometimes a legend was just that — a legend” (74).

Even as Langdon begins coming face-to-face with pieces of the pyramid, he still believes he is not seeing the real Masonic Pyramid. For instance, he, Sato and Anderson find the base of the pyramid in the subbasement of the Capitol Building. Sato shows him the capstone of the pyramid as it appeared on an x-ray, inside his daybag. Bellamy, who is a Mason, tries to convince Langdon what he is looking at is the Masonic Pyramid. He explains that even though the legend makes it appear the pyramid is huge, tall enough to be touched by God, this description is based on the idea that God is within man. Bellamy tells Langdon, “Symbolically speaking, one could claim that anything within reach of an enlightened man . . . is within reach of God” (246).

When Langdon is confronted by Sato with questions about the legend of the pyramid, he answers in ways that are very reasonable, “With respect, ma’am, we’ve all heard of the Fountain of Youth and Shangri-la, but that does not mean they exist” (97). It is an attempt to help her understand that he believes the pyramid is another one of these legends of history that everyone has heard of but no one has ever seen.

Peter makes the final attempt to get Langdon to believe that the Ancient Mysteries do exist and are buried in Washington D.C. “I want you to believe . . . just for an instant . . . believe in the legend” (601) Peter tells Langdon as he prepares to show him the place where the secrets are buried. It is when Peter takes Langdon to the Washington Monument and shows him the coincidences that point to that structure being the place where a copy of the Bible, the Lost Word or Ancient Secrets, was buried in the capstone that Langdon really began to see his friend’s way of thinking. Peter even provided him with historical fact to support his claim that a Bible was buried in the capstone. “Langdon now realized to his astonishment that much of what Peter had declared to be true . . . was in fact true” (605).

Styles

Point of View

The *Lost Symbol* is told from the point of view of a third person omniscient narrator. The reliable narrator records the thoughts and emotions of all of characters. More emphasis is placed on Langdon, the hero, and Mal'akh, the villain, than the other characters.

Depth is added to the story by the use of symbols and language. Therefore, it makes sense for the author to choose a consistent style of narration with few changes in point of view. This third person point of view also allows the author to switch quickly between the experiences of different characters without having to change points of the view. The story flows smoothly from character to character without sharp breaks caused by changing points of view.

Language and Meaning

Language is important in this novel as the characters struggle to decode an ancient pyramid encrypted with different types of codes and symbols. In order to decode the pyramid the main characters have to learn to think outside the box in terms of the meanings of words and phrases. For instance the Masons have a saying that "all is revealed at thirty-three degrees." Most people who hear this phrase take it at face value and believe that all the secrets of Masons are given to a member once they reach membership in the thirty-third degree, or level, of the establishment. When Katherine and Langdon begin trying to interpret the pyramid they realize they have to take into consideration all of the meanings of the word degree. For instance, Langdon must turn the Masonic ring thirty-three degrees in the box in which the capstone is stored in order for the box to transform into a cross. Once the pyramid itself is heated to thirty-three degrees, a hidden script that glows only at a certain temperature is revealed. More codes are revealed when the heating also melts the wax cover of the pyramid.

Symbols in the novel also carry their own form of language. For instance, Langdon recognizes the small dot enclosed in a circle as a circumpunct, the symbol of Ancient Mysteries. He also recognizes that this circumpunct, combined with the image of the cross makes a symbol different from the traditional Christian cross, called a Rose Cross. Once Langdon had learned that the Ancient Mysteries are buried in the capstone of the Washington Monument, he notes how the National Mall looks like the flattened box in which the capstone had been stored.

Structure

The *Lost Symbol* is different from the traditional novel because there is exposition (background information) throughout the entire story as characters learn about the pyramid and its relationship to God and America. This exposition lasts to the end of the

novel where Peter explains to Langdon about the location of the Ancient Mysteries and their place in the lives of men.

The action rises from the point in Chapter 6 when Langdon enters the National Statuary Hall of the Capitol building where he is supposed to give a lecture and finds that room completely empty. The action builds up to the point in Chapter 95 when Mal'akh tricks Katherine and Langdon into coming to his home and then takes them as his hostages. The story remains at this high climax through the point where Mal'akh is killed in Chapter 121 when the CIA helicopter nicks and breaks the skylight above the altar in the Temple Room where Mal'akh is lying.

From this point the action falls as Peter learns that Katherine has survived and that Langdon is not dead. The action continues to fall as Peter explains to Langdon the location of the Ancient Mysteries and the significance of the place where they are hidden. The denouement comes when Katherine and Langdon watch the sunrise over the Washington Monument and Langdon realizes there is still hope for the world.

Note that in this book there is a Prologue, an Epilogue and Chapters 1 - 133. Since thirty-three is such an important number in the Masonic beliefs, it is certainly no coincidence that the author chose to end the novel on Chapter 133.



Quotes

He had brought her to this place not to behold scientific marvels, but rather to create them. And that was exactly what Katherine had been doing.

-- Narrator (Chapter 7)

Importance: Peter had created a special lab for his sister, Katherine, to perform experiments in Noetic Science. This quote describes the first time he took Katherine to the Smithsonian Museum Support Center, which was full of historical artifacts and scientific marvels, to see her new lab.

America's intended destiny has been lost to history."

-- Narrator (Chapter 20)

Importance: Langdon is aware that the true purpose of America is not what is taught in history books. America's forefathers had intended to create a new Rome and a new intellectual era, complete with temples that featured Greek gods and goddesses. Peter Solomon, Langdon's mentor, believed America's forefathers intended scientific knowledge to be the guiding force of the development of the country.

No need?' Sato demanded. 'Professor, we have a man who believes this room contains a portal that has the potential to make him a god; we have a ceiling fresco that symbolizes the transformation of a man into a god; and we have a hand pointing straight at that painting. It seems everything is urging us upward.'"

-- Sato (Chapter 21)

Importance: There are obvious signs that they need to search the ceiling of the Rotunda for a hidden portal, Sato is intent on believing that they need to go up. Langdon, however, tells her that he does not believe they should follow those obvious signs.

I didn't seal this package, Robert. My great-grandfather did. Almost a century ago."

-- Peter (Chapter 24)

Importance: When Peter tells Langdon that his great-grandfather was the one who sealed the package that he gives Langdon for safekeeping, he gives Langdon an idea about how long the contents of the box have been kept secret.

As Mal'akh gripped the older man's palm, he saw the gold Masonic ring on Solomon's hand . . . the same hand that had once aimed a gun at Mal'akh. A voice whispered from Mal'akh's distant past. If you pull that trigger, I will haunt you forever."

-- Narrator (Chapter 29)

Importance: Although Peter does not yet know, the man who has disguised himself as Dr. Abaddon is the same man who killed Peter's mother years ago. Mal'akh, however,



does remember what Peter did that day as well as his promise to Peter that he would haunt him forever if Peter shot him.

Wait!' Langdon said, no longer able to stand idly by. 'Think about it. Peter gave up his right hand rather than reveal whatever might be behind this door. Are you sure we want to do this? Unlocking this door is essentially complying with the demands of a terrorist.'
-- Langdon (Chapter 35)

Importance: Langdon is not sure if he, Sato, and Anderson are doing the right thing by breaking into Peter's personal storage area at the Capitol Building. He provides as evidence that Peter was willing to lose his hand in order to keep the secret. Langdon argues that if the secret hidden in the room was that important, Peter would not want them to break into the room and, perhaps, reveal the secret.

No more unnerving than Christians praying at the feet of a man nailed to a cross, or Hindus chanting in front of a four-armed elephant named Ganesh. Misunderstanding a culture's symbols is a common root of prejudice."
-- Langdon (Chapter 38)

Importance: Although Sato believes that the symbols of death they find in Peter's meditation chamber are disturbing, Langdon argues these symbols are just misunderstood. He compares it to the way a person unfamiliar with Christianity might be disturbed by the Christian's habit of praying at the base of a crucifix.

First, the claim that Langdon was the only person on earth who could break it was absurd. Second, for Sato to suggest that a Masonic cipher was an issue of national security was like her suggesting our nuclear launch codes were encrypted with a Cracker Jack decoder ring."
-- Narrator (Chapter 46)

Importance: Langdon believes that the code on the pyramid is so easy to decipher that there is no way that he is the only one who can break it. He makes a ludicrous comparison, encryption of the nuclear launch codes with a toy, to help the reader understand how easy it was for someone who knew what he was doing to break the code.

This capstone is the legend to the pyramid. It is the key that tells you how to read the most powerful artifact on earth . . . a map that unveils the hiding place of mankind's greatest treasure — the lost wisdom of the ages."
-- Bellamy (Chapter 49)

Importance: Bellamy explains to Langdon that the idea of the Masonic Pyramid is not a legend or myth. The word "legend" when it used to refer to the pyramid's capstone means the legend (key) that told readers how to interpret the map of the pyramid.

Tonight, however, the pieces have come dangerously close. I'm sure I don't have to say this . . . but it is our duty to ensure this pyramid is not assembled."



-- Bellamy (Chapter 53)

Importance: Even though he knows it may result in Peter's death, Bellamy tells Langdon that the two pieces of the pyramid should not be put together. According to the Masonic oath, the Masons have the responsibility to guard the secrets of the pyramid, even over the life of a member.

The answer had come to him several months later. Andros was sitting alone in his villa, absently surfing channels in the middle of the night, when he stumbled across a program about the secrets of Freemasonry.

-- Narrator (Chapter 57)

Importance: Even after Andros (Mal'akh) made himself a new life with Zachary's money, he soon began to feel that his life was empty again. When he saw a documentary about the Freemasons, Andros realized what in his life was missing.

His father took a deep breath. 'It is the choice . . . between wealth or wisdom.'

-- Peter (Chapter 61)

Importance: Zachary laughed when his father asked him if he wanted to take his inheritance, which was due him when he turned eighteen, or if he wanted to join the Masons and gain wisdom. Zachary did not understand the question or his father's claim that it was an honor to be allowed to guard the stone pyramid.

This stone pyramid, whatever it is, has cost me my entire family. First my nephew, Zachary, then my mother, and now my brother. And let's face it, Robert, if you hadn't called tonight to warn me . . ."

-- Katherine (Chapter 62)

Importance: Although Langdon hesitates about breaking the seal on the box that holds the pyramid's capstone, Katherine believes they have no choice. She believes that pyramid has cost her many of her family members. She does not intend to let it take her brother from her.

I've been afraid of this. All night, I've had a feeling we're treating as reality a collection of myths and allegories. Maybe this inscription is pointing to a metaphorical location—telling us that the true potential of man can be accessed only through the one true God."

-- Langdon (Chapter 70)

Importance: When the translation of the pyramid does not reveal what they had hoped, Langdon shares with Katherine his fear that all of the secrets hidden by the pyramid are allegorical. Katherine is afraid because she knows if they cannot give Mal'akh a physical location, he will kill Peter.

As he pushed down, the raised circle on the box slid into the ring's opening, and there was a faint but decisive click.

-- Narrator (Chapter 84)



Importance: Even though Galloway tells Katherine and Langdon that the pyramid can transform itself, they are still surprised when the Masonic ring clicks into place in the circumplex inside the box where the capstone of the pyramid had been stored.

Mal'akh had never forgotten that night. Solomon's brutal decision had meant the end of his son, Zach, but it had been the birth of Mal'akh."

-- Narrator (Chapter 86)

Importance: Like other phrases in this book, this quote has a double meaning. When Mal'akh hears his father tell the prison administrator that he will not pay to have his son released from jail, he decides to symbolically end his life as Zachary. Through the course of the novel the reader believes that Zachary is physically dead. It is not until almost the end of the story that Mal'akh tells his father his real identity.

The square of stone before him was obviously the base of the pyramid, and yet it looked somehow different. Very different. It was still square, and still stone . . . but it was no longer flat and smooth.

-- Narrator (Chapter 95)

Importance: As Langdon looks at the pyramid as he lies on the floor of Mal'akh's house, he discovers that by boiling the pyramid they had removed a wax coating and had revealed more text.

Director Inoue Sato was not a woman who often felt cold . . . or fear. At the moment, however, she was feeling both.

-- Narrator (Chapter 105)

Importance: Sato is a woman who is usually impenetrable, but she feels fear when she realizes that her agents have not heard from Hartmann, the agent who had been sent to Kalorama Heights, where Mal'akh lived.

For years Peter had carried the burden of responsibility for his son's death. He had told Katherine many times that leaving Zachary in prison had been the worst mistake of his life and that he would never find a way to forgive himself.

-- Narrator (Chapter 107)

Importance: This quote indicates how deeply Peter believed it was his fault that Zachary was killed in prison. He had been unable to forgive himself for leaving Zachary there when he had an opportunity to save him.

The Temple Room was the same place in which Peter Solomon and his brethren had so foolishly initiated Mal'akh as one of their own."

-- Narrator (Chapter 115)

Importance: Mal'akh believes it is fitting that he will make his final sacrifice in the



Temple Room, the same place where he had been initiated into the brotherhood of the Masons.

Langdon could already tell that the video was an unfair piece of propaganda, omitting all the noblest aspects of the initiation and highlighting only the most disconcerting.

-- Narrator (Chapter 117)

Importance: When Langdon watches the video that Mal'akh had made of his initiation, he recognizes it as a piece of propaganda intended to upset people and cause misconceptions of the Masons. He knows that if others were to see the video, however, they would take it as the absolute truth about the secretive organization.

A gathering of the most decorated and accomplished Masons in the most powerful city on earth would logically include many influential and well-known individuals. Sure enough, seated around the altar, adorned in their long silk gloves, Masonic aprons, and glistening jewels, were some of the country's most powerful men."

-- Narrator (Chapter 117)

Importance: Part of the problem with the video that Mal'akh had produced was that he had gotten footage of many politicians and other influential men who were members of the Masons. The CIA believed ordinary American citizens would not want people who were members of such an unusual group as the Masons leading the country or having positions of power.

Peter,' he whispered, enjoying every moment of his captive's horror, 'you forgot you have a second family . . . your Masonic brothers. And I will destroy them, too . . . unless you help me.'"

-- Mal'akh (Chapter 118)

Importance: Hoping to influence Peter to give him the word that he wants, Mal'akh warns Peter that if he does not cooperate, Mal'akh has the power to destroy not only Peter's biological family but also the brotherhood of the Masons. Mal'akh refers to a video he made during his initiations. He has edited this video so that it shows only the strange and upsetting part of the Masonic ceremonies, ones that will cause the people who see it to develop fear for the Masons.

And tonight, when I saw these seven symbols, I realized in an instant that the legend was true. The Lost Word is buried in D.C. . . . and it does rest at the bottom of a long staircase beneath an enormous engraved stone."

-- Peter (Chapter 126)

Importance: Peter explains to Langdon that when he looked at the seven symbols from the grid on the bottom of the pyramid that he realized that the Lost Word was real and that he knew where it was located.

We only call it the 'Word' because that's what the ancients called it . . . in the beginning."

-- Peter (Chapter 129)



Importance: Peter explains to Langdon that the Ancient Mysteries, the Bible, are also referred to as the Lost Word because the Bible is referred to as the Word in the text of the Bible.

Exactly. Our physical bodies have evolved over the ages, but it was our minds that were created in the image of God. We've been reading the Bible too literally. We learn that God created us in his image, but it's not our physical bodies that resemble God, it's our minds."

-- Katherine (Chapter 133)

Importance: Katherine tries to convince Langdon that God intended people to seek knowledge and be creators, just like God. She argues that it is man's mind that was made in the image of God, not necessarily his physical appearance.