

Author of the international bestseller

The Da Vinci Code

DAN
BROWN

DIGITAL
FORTRESS



'Pure genius...Dan Brown has to be one of the best, smartest, and most accomplished writers in the country'

NELSON DEMILLE

Dan Brown is the bestselling author of *Digital Fortress*, *Deception Point*, *Angels and Demons* and *The Da Vinci Code*. He is a graduate of Amherst College and Phillips Exeter Academy, where he has taught English and creative writing. He lives with his wife in New England and can be found on the web at www.danbrown.com

Acclaim for *The Da Vinci Code*:

'The word for *The Da Vinci Code* is a rare invertible palindrome. Rotated 180 degrees on a horizontal axis so that it is upside down, it denotes the maternal essence that is sometimes linked to the sport of soccer. Read right side up, it concisely conveys the kind of extreme enthusiasm with which this riddle-filled, code-breaking, exhilaratingly brainy thriller can be recommended. That word is wow. The author is Dan Brown (a name you will want to remember). In this gleefully erudite suspense novel, Mr Brown takes the format he has been developing through three earlier novels and fine-tunes it to blockbuster perfection. Not since the advent of Harry Potter has an author so flagrantly delighted in leading readers on a breathless chase and coaxing them through hoops ... The book moves at a breakneck pace, with the author seeming thoroughly to enjoy his contrivances. Virtually every chapter ends with a cliffhanger' Janet Maslin, *New York Times*

'Intrigue and menace mingle in one of the finest mysteries I've ever read. An amazing tale with enigma piled on secrets stacked on riddles' *New York Times* bestselling author, Clive Cussler

'*The Da Vinci Code* is a fascinating and absorbing read - perfect for history buffs, conspiracy nuts, puzzle lovers or anyone who appreciates a great, riveting read. Dan Brown is my new must-read. I loved this book' *New York Times* bestselling author, Harlan Coben

'I would never have believed that this is my kind of thriller, but I'm going to tell you something - the more I read, the more I had to read. In *The Da Vinci Code*, Dan Brown has built a world that is rich in fascinating detail, and I could not get enough of it. Mr Brown, I am your fan' *New York Times* bestselling author, Robert Crais

'*The Da Vinci Code* sets the hook-of-all-hooks. This novel takes off down a road that is as eye-opening as it is page-turning. You simply cannot put it down. Thriller readers everywhere will soon realize Dan Brown is a master' *New York Times* bestselling author, Vince Flynn

'This is pure genius. Dan Brown has to be one of the best, smartest, and most accomplished writers in the country' Nelson DeMille

'Thriller writing doesn't get any better than this' *Denver Post*

'A heart-racing thriller. This story has so many twists – all satisfying, most unexpected – that it would be a sin to reveal too much of the plot in advance. Let's just say that if this novel doesn't get your pulse racing, you need to check your meds' *San Francisco Chronicle*

'Exceedingly clever. Both fascinating and fun ... a considerable achievement' *Washington Post*

'This masterpiece should be mandatory reading. Brown solidifies his reputation as one of the most skilled thriller writers on the planet with his best book yet, a compelling blend of history and page-turning suspense. Highly recommended' *Library Journal*

'A new master of smart thrills. A pulse-quickening, brain-teasing adventure' *People magazine*

'A thundering, tantalizing, extremely smart fun ride. Brown doesn't slow down his tremendously powerful narrative engine despite transmitting several doctorates' worth of fascinating history and learned speculation, *The Da Vinci Code* is brain candy of the highest quality – which is a reviewer's code meaning, "Put this on top of your pile"' *Chicago Tribune*

'One hell of a read. A gripping mix of murder and myth'
New York Daily News

'An international chase ... a quest ... codes within codes. Brown's novel is a page-turner ... and you'll never view "The Last Supper" the same way again' *The Christian Science Monitor*

'Dan Brown's conspiracy-theory thriller is the pulp must-read of the season ... an ingenious mixture of paranoid thriller, art history lesson, chase story, religious symbology lecture and anti-clerical screed, and it's the most fun you can have between the sort of covers that aren't 300-count Egyptian cotton' *Salon.com*

'Far more than the average thriller. Intellectually satisfying ... page-turning suspense' *Houston Chronicle*

'Brown has assembled a whopper of a plot that will please conspiracy buffs and thriller addicts alike' *Publishers Weekly*

'A dazzling performance by Brown ... a delightful display of erudition. Brown delivers a crackling, intricate mystery, complete with breathtaking escapes and several stunning surprises. It's challenging, exciting, and a whole lot more. The race across France and the United Kingdom leads us on a fascinating journey through a covert, enigmatic world revealed through a seemingly endless collection of codes, puzzles, anagrams, cryptograms, and messages hidden not only in Da Vinci's art but in things we think we know well' *Boston Globe*

'Brainy stuff. The standard car chases and intrigues are leavened with Crichtonesque discursions on medieval iconography, the formation of the early Christian church, and history's suppression of the "sacred feminine"' *Entertainment Weekly*

'A stunning new thriller that will provoke much debate. Dan Brown's extensive research on secret societies and symbology adds intellectual depth to this page-turning thriller. His surprising revelations on Da Vinci's penchant for hiding codes in his paintings will lead the reader to search out such renowned artistic icons as The Mona Lisa, The Madonna of the Rocks and The Last Supper. The Last Supper holds the most astonishing coded secrets of all and, after reading *The Da Vinci Code*, you will never see this famous painting in quite the same way again' *Bookreporter.com*

'Some readers spurn genre fiction, often due to a misguided belief that mass entertainment is always mindless dribble. For those of you who know better, *The Da Vinci Code* will make you feel justifiably smug. It's that rare book that manages to both entertain and educate simultaneously. Dan Brown has managed to outdo the best of Robert Ludlum in this byzantine . . . and engrossing story. There is enough medieval history to please any historian and enough action to satisfy a hardcore thrill-seeker . . . an early favorite for thriller of the year' *Rocky Mountain News*

'Enthralling . . . Dan Brown masterfully concocts an intelligent and lucid thriller that marries the gusto of an international murder mystery with a collection of fascinating esoterica culled from 2,000 years of Western history. Brown's hero and heroine embark on a lofty and intriguing exploration of some of culture's greatest mysteries - from the nature of the Mona Lisa's smile to the secret of the Holy Grail . . . rich food for thought' *amazon.com*

'*The Da Vinci Code* shines - brilliantly - in its exploration of cryptology, particularly the encoding methods developed by Leonardo Da Vinci, whose art and manuscripts are packed with mystifying symbolism and quirky codes' *Wired magazine*

'Brown's intricate plot delivers more satisfying twists than a licorice factory' *Booklist*

'A blockbuster with brains. *The Da Vinci Code* is a thrill-a-minute adventure as well as an educational tour of France and England, symbology 101, riddle-breaking for dummies, the magical powers of anagrams, numerical codes to die for and navigational factoids' *The Ottawa Citizen*

'Brown's scholarship never slows down the sizzling action [of this] absorbing new novel . . . a labyrinth of intricate schemes, sidetracks, and deceptions' *Bookpage*

'A mystery that challenges our intelligence, ~~and~~ twists and turns to keep the reader turning the pages. *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown does all this just right. This is how a mystery thriller should be written. So grab this book, sit back, and prepare to be entertained and educated. It's well-written, it's intelligent, and best of all, it's fun' *Reviews of Books.com*

'Calling Dan Brown's latest novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, simply a "smart suspense novel" is like referring to Harvard as simply a pretty good university. Incorporating massive amounts of historical and academic information is no easy task, but Brown does it in such a seamless fashion that it is almost invisible within the story's natural narrative. Definitely the mark of a master craftsman'
The Mystery Reader

'Narrow escapes, baffling codes . . . fascinating discoveries about the Holy Grail, and, yes, a small teaser of budding romance. Brown proves he's one of the new masters of intrigue and suspense'
Philadelphia Inquirer

'You'll love this. *The Da Vinci Code* has enough twists and turns in a short amount of time to give you over to gasping "More, Dan, more!" It is thrilling that anyone could contrive such an adventure'
Seattle Times

Also by Dan Brown

DECEPTION POINT
ANGELS AND DEMONS
THE DA VINCI CODE

DIGITAL FORTRESS

Dan Brown



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*For my parents . . .
my mentors and heroes*

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PROLOGUE

PLAZA DE ESPAÑA

SEVILLE, SPAIN

11:00 A.M.

It is said that in death, all things become clear; Ensei Tankado now knew it was true. As he clutched his chest and fell to the ground in pain, he realized the horror of his mistake.

People appeared, hovering over him, trying to help. But Tankado did not want help – it was too late for that.

Trembling, he raised his left hand and held his fingers outward. *Look at my hand!* The faces around him stared, but he could tell they did not understand.

On his finger was an engraved golden ring. For an instant, the markings glimmered in the Andalusian sun. Ensei Tankado knew it was the last light he would ever see.

CHAPTER 1

They were in the Smoky Mountains at their favorite bed-and-breakfast. David was smiling down at her. 'What do you say, gorgeous? Marry me?'

Looking up from their canopy bed, she knew he was the one. Forever. As she stared into his deep-green eyes, somewhere in the distance a deafening bell began to ring. It was pulling him away. She reached for him, but her arms clutched empty air.

It was the sound of the phone that fully awoke Susan Fletcher from her dream. She gasped, sat up in bed, and fumbled for the receiver. 'Hello?'

'Susan, it's David. Did I wake you?'

She smiled, rolling over in bed. 'I was just dreaming of you. Come over and play.'

He laughed. 'It's still dark out.'

'Mmm.' She moaned sensuously. 'Then *definitely* come over and play. We can sleep in before we head north.'

David let out a frustrated sigh. 'That's why I'm calling. It's about our trip. I've got to postpone.'

Susan was suddenly wide awake. 'What!'

'I'm sorry. I've got to leave town. I'll be back by

tomorrow. We can head up first thing in the morning. We'll still have two days.'

'But I made reservations,' Susan said, hurt. 'I got our old room at Stone Manor.'

'I know, but—'

'Tonight was supposed to be *special* – to celebrate six months. You *do* remember we're engaged, don't you?'

'Susan.' He sighed. 'I really can't go into it now, they've got a car waiting. I'll call you from the plane and explain everything.'

'Plane?' she repeated. 'What's going on? Why would the university . . . ?'

'It's not the university. I'll phone and explain later. I've really got to go; they're calling for me. I'll be in touch. I promise.'

'David!' she cried. 'What's—'

But it was too late. David had hung up.

Susan Fletcher lay awake for hours waiting for him to call back. The phone never rang.

Later that afternoon Susan sat dejected in the tub. She submerged herself in the soapy water and tried to forget Stone Manor and the Smoky Mountains. *Where could he be?* she wondered. *Why hasn't he called?*

Gradually the water around her went from hot to lukewarm and finally to cold. She was about to get out when her cordless phone buzzed to life. Susan bolted upright, sloshing water on the floor as she grappled for the receiver she'd left on the sink.

'David?'

'It's Strathmore,' the voice replied.

Susan slumped. 'Oh.' She was unable to hide her disappointment. 'Good afternoon, Commander.'

'Hoping for a younger man?' The voice chuckled.

'No, sir,' Susan said, embarrassed. 'It's not how it—'

'Sure it is.' He laughed. 'David Becker's a good man. Don't ever lose him.'

'Thank you, sir.'

The commander's voice turned suddenly stern. 'Susan, I'm calling because I need you in here. Pronto.'

She tried to focus. 'It's Saturday, sir. We don't usually—'

'I know,' he said calmly. 'It's an emergency.'

Susan sat up. *Emergency?* She had never heard the word cross Commander Strathmore's lips. *An emergency? In Crypto?* She couldn't imagine. 'Y-yes, sir.' She paused. 'I'll be there as soon as I can.'

'Make it sooner.' Strathmore hung up.

Susan Fletcher stood wrapped in a towel and dripped on the neatly folded clothes she'd set out the night before – hiking shorts, a sweater for the cool mountain evenings, and the new lingerie she'd bought for the nights. Depressed, she went to her closet for a clean blouse and skirt. *An emergency? In Crypto?*

As she went downstairs, Susan wondered how the day could get much worse.

She was about to find out.

CHAPTER 2

Thirty thousand feet above a dead-calm ocean, David Becker stared miserably from the Learjet 60's small, oval window. He'd been told the phone on board was out of order, and he'd never had a chance to call Susan.

'What am I doing here?' he grumbled to himself. But the answer was simple – there were men to whom you just didn't say no.

'Mr Becker,' the loudspeaker crackled. 'We'll be arriving in half an hour.'

Becker nodded gloomily to the invisible voice. *Wonderful*. He pulled the shade and tried to sleep. But he could only think of her.

CHAPTER 3

Susan's Volvo sedan rolled to a stop in the shadow of the ten-foot-high, barbed Cyclone fence. A young guard placed his hand on the roof.

'ID, please.'

Susan obliged and settled in for the usual half-minute wait. The officer ran her card through a computerized scanner. Finally he looked up. 'Thank you, Ms Fletcher.' He gave an imperceptible sign, and the gate swung open.

Half a mile ahead Susan repeated the entire procedure at an equally imposing electrified fence. *Come on, guys . . . I've only been through here a million times.*

As she approached the final checkpoint, a stocky sentry with two attack dogs and a machine gun glanced down at her license plate and waved her through. She followed Canine Road for another 250 yards and pulled into Employee Lot C. Unbelievable, she thought. *Twenty-six thousand employees and a twelve-billion-dollar budget; you'd think they could make it through the weekend without me.* Susan gunned the car into her reserved spot and killed the engine.

After crossing the landscaped terrace and entering