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For the fortunate few who haven't read it, here's a brief summary of Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code*, somewhat re-arranged for clarity's sake.

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Da Vinci Code and Opus Dei

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE DA VINCI CODE

A British historian, Sir Leigh Teabing, is convinced of two things: that the

Priory of Sion, a secret society founded in 1099, possesses documents that reveal Jesus Christ's marriage to Mary Magdalen, their surviving bloodline, and the location of her relics; that ever since the early years of Christianity, a male-chauvinist Vatican has been ruthlessly suppressing these facts in order to eradicate matriarchal paganism, which is characterized by its deep reverence for "the sacred feminine." When Teabing discovers that the Priory will never reveal its secret, he decides to take matters into his own hands and unmask Christianity as "the greatest story ever sold."

Knowing that Bishop Aringarosa is seeking a way to prevent the Vatican from abolishing Opus Dei, Teabing contacts Aringarosa anonymously and, pretending to be a devout Catholic called "the Teacher," offers the bishop enormous clout through

the acquisition of a sacred relic: the Holy Grail. Assured the plan involves no killing, Aringarosa puts an albino Opus Dei monk named Silas at the Teacher's disposal.

Taking orders by phone from the Teacher, Silas shoots the Priory's four leaders in Paris after extracting from them the Grail's supposed location. Their (false) replies lead him to the Church of San Sulpice, where he fails to find the Grail and kills Sister Sandrine, a nun who is in league with the Priory.

Meanwhile, in his dying moments, after Silas has left him mortally wounded inside the Louvre, Jacques Saunier, the Priory's Grand Master, manages to leave a complicated set of clues – various symbols, a number series, anagrams, his own body's position - at the crime scene. These clues draw two people into the homicide investigation: Saunier's

estranged grand-daughter Sophie Neveu, a police cryptologist, and Robert Langdon, a Harvard symbology professor who happens to be lecturing in Paris that evening. The clues lead the pair to two paintings by Leonardo da Vinci: the Mona Lisa and The Madonna of the Rocks, behind which Sophie finds a key to a Swiss bank deposit box.

The circumstances of the crime convince the French police inspector, Bezu Fache, that Robert Langdon is Saunier's murderer, but Sophie and Langdon elude the police, escape from the Louvre and manage to find and open the Swiss bank deposit box, inside which they discover a "cryptex" – a stone cylinder made of rotating disks, each engraved with the letters of the alphabet.

Unable to open the cryptex, they flee for advice to the nearby chateau of the world's foremost Grail expert -

none other than Sir Leigh Teabing - unaware that he is the mastermind behind the murders. During a long conversation, Teabing explains that the Holy Grail is not a chalice at all, but a person – in fact, Mary Magdalen, who is the “Holy Grail” because her womb carried Jesus’s royal bloodline. Teabing claims that Leonardo da Vinci knew this secret and that the figure of St. John in his Last Supper is really Mary Magdalen. Teabing also relates more fictitious “info” about Constantine, the divinity of Christ, the Vatican, the Priory of Sion, the Knights Templar, the gnostic gospels, the Merovingians, and the sacred feminine.

The conversation is interrupted when Silas, sent by “the Teacher” (i.e., Teabing himself), enters the chateau to steal the keystone. His attempt fails, however, and he is captured by the others, who, with the French police in hot pursuit, flee to

England in a private jet. During the flight, they manage to open the cryptex, only to find a poem and another smaller cryptex inside.

While the others look for clues in the Templars' church in London, Silas is freed by Teabing's chauffeur/ accomplice Remy, who says that he too is working for "the Teacher". Together, Remy and Silas steal the cryptex from Langdon at gunpoint, and Remy pretends to take Teabing hostage. Langdon and Sophie see Remy's face, however, thus establishing a connection between "the Teacher" and Teabing's household, so, once Silas leaves for Opus Dei's London house, Teabing, now in possession of the cryptex, poisons Remy.

Tipped off by Teabing, the police attempt to capture Silas, who, while trying to escape in a wild gunfight, is mortally wounded and unwittingly

shoots Bishop Aringarosa, who has flown to London after a phone call from police inspector Bezu Fache convinces him that he has been badly deceived by “the Teacher.” (Aringarosa survives and gives 20 million euro to the families of Silas’s victims.)

In a final confrontation in Westminster Abbey, Langdon and Sophie discover that “the Teacher” and Teabing are one and the same. While Teabing endeavors to corrupt him, Langdon guesses the code to open the second cryptex, pockets its contents, and tricks Teabing into dropping his gun. Finally, Bezu Fache arrives and arrests Teabing.

The doggerel inside the second cryptex leads Langdon and Sophie to Rosslyn Chapel in Scotland, where they meet her grandmother and brother, whom she had thought to be dead. They learn that the Priory

considers Sophie and her brother to be descendents of Jesus and Mary Magdalen. But the Grail is not there, and the final verse turns out to have a double meaning, referring both to Rosslyn and the Rose Line meridian in Paris, where, several days later, the truth finally dawns on Langdon. The novel ends as he finds the Grail's location inside the Louvre. Recalling Teabing's words - "The quest for the Holy Grail is the quest to kneel before the bones of Mary Magdalen" - Langdon falls to his knees and hears a voice of ancient wisdom whispering up like foul bubbles from the bowels of the Louvre.

Fr. John Wauck