

Task for *Carry Me Down*

Activity 4: Extract

Chapter 1

Robert Langdon awoke slowly.

A telephone was ringing in the darkness—a tinny, unfamiliar ring. He fumbled for the bedside lamp and turned it on. Squinting at his surroundings he saw a plush Renaissance bedroom with Louis XVI furniture, hand-frescoed walls, and a colossal mahogany four-poster bed.

“Monsieur Langdon?” a man’s voice said. “I hope I have not awoken you?”

Dazed, Langdon looked at the bedside clock. It was 12:32 A.M. He had been asleep only an hour, but he felt like the dead.

“This is the concierge, monsieur. I apologize for this intrusion, but you have a visitor. He insists it is urgent.”

Where the hell am I?

The jacquard bathrobe hanging on his bedpost bore the monogram: *HOTEL RITZ PARIS*.

Slowly, the fog began to lift.

Langdon picked up the receiver. “Hello?”

Langdon still felt fuzzy. *A visitor?* His eyes focused now on a crumpled flyer on his bedside table.

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF PARIS

proudly presents

an evening with Robert Langdon

Professor of Religious Symbolology,

Harvard University

Langdon groaned. Tonight’s lecture - a slide show about pagan symbolism hidden in the stones of Chartres Cathedral - had probably ruffled some conservative feathers in the audience. Most likely, some religious scholar had trailed him home to pick a fight.

“I’m sorry,” Langdon said, “but I’m very tired and-”

“*Mais monsieur,*” the concierge pressed, lowering his voice to an urgent whisper. “Your guest is an important man.”

Langdon had little doubt. His books on religious paintings and cult symbology had made him a reluctant celebrity in the art world, and last year Langdon's visibility had increased a hundred-fold after his involvement in a widely publicized incident at the Vatican. Since then, the stream of self-important historians and art buffs arriving at his door had seemed never-ending.

"If you would be so kind," Langdon said, doing his best to remain polite, "could you take the man's name and number, and tell him I'll try to call him before I leave Paris on Tuesday? Thank you." He hung up before the concierge could protest.

Sitting up now, Langdon frowned at his bedside *Guest Relations Handbook*, whose cover boasted: SLEEP LIKE A BABY IN THE CITY OF LIGHTS. SLUMBER AT THE PARIS RITZ. He turned and gazed tiredly into the full-length mirror across the room. The man staring back at him was a stranger -tousled and weary.

You need a vacation, Robert.

The past year had taken a heavy toll on him, but he didn't appreciate seeing proof in the mirror. His usually sharp blue eyes looked hazy and drawn tonight. A dark stubble was shrouding his strong jaw and dimpled chin. Around his temples, the gray highlights were advancing, making their way deeper into his thicket of coarse black hair. Although his female colleagues insisted the gray only accentuated his bookish appeal, Langdon knew better.

(from Chapter 1, *The Da Vinci Code*, Dan Brown)