Director Inoue Sato stood with her arms folded, her eyes locked skeptically on Langdon as she processed what he had just told her.Known as "The Michelangelo of the Capitol," Brumidi had laid claim to the Capitol Rotunda in the same way Michelangelo had laid claim to the Sistine Chapel, by painting a fresco on the room's most lofty canvas--the ceiling. Like Michelangelo, Brumidi had done some of his finest work inside the Vatican. Brumidi, however, immigrated to America in 1852, abandoning God's largest shrine in favor of a new shrine, the U.S. Capitol, which now glistened with examples of his mastery--from the trompe l'oeil of the Brumidi Corridors to the frieze ceiling of the Vice President's Room. And yet it was the enormous image hovering above the Capitol Rotunda that most historians considered to be Brumidi's masterwork. Robert Langdon gazed up at the massive fresco that covered the ceiling. He usually enjoyed his students' startled reactions to this fresco's bizarre imagery, but at the moment he simply felt trapped in a nightmare he had yet to understand. Director Sato was standing next to him with her hands on her hips, frowning up at the distant ceiling. Langdon sensed she was having the same reaction many had when they first stopped to examine the painting at the core of their nation. Utter confusion. You're not alone, Langdon thought. For most people, The Apotheosis of Washington got stranger and stranger the longer they looked at it. "That's George Washington on the central panel," Langdon said, pointing 180 feet upward into the middle of the dome."I don't know why this guy thinks I know anything at all!"This guy's a lunatic."She stared directly at Langdon and then glanced at Anderson."The hole in the floor," Langdon told them, "was eventually covered, but for a good while, those who visited the Rotunda could see straight down to the fire that burned below.""The Temple of Vesta in Rome," Langdon said, "was circular, with a gaping hole in the floor, through which the sacred fire of enlightenment could be tended by a sisterhood of virgins whose job it was to ensure the flame never went out.""If it's of any help," Langdon said, "Peter's hand is not the first such hand to make an appearance in this Rotunda.""A moment ago," Sato said, "you suggested this Rotunda is somehow sacred to the idea of these Ancient Mysteries?""Nearby," Langdon continued, "you can see a strange, anachronistic series of figures: ancient gods presenting our forefathers with advanced knowledge."We've been through this," Langdon fired back."Ma'am," Langdon said, "the largest painting in this building is called The Apotheosis of Washington.Langdon had already permitted his eyes to follow the pointing finger up to the dome overhead.Langdon looked down at Peter's upstretched finger, again feeling repulsed by his captor's sadistic play on words.Langdon shrugged weakly.Langdon often reminded his students that most modern religions included stories that did not hold up to scientific scrutiny: everything from Moses parting the Red Sea .Langdon looked way, way up to the tiny railing visible just beneath the painting and felt his body go rigid.She glanced directly at Langdon, then at Peter's hand."In theory, anyway.To look for a literal portal would be like trying to locate the actual Gates of Heaven."Langdon nodded.Langdon motioned to the hand.Langdon hesitated, realizing that for many religious people, there was indeed a precedent for human gods, Jesus being the most obvious."Look at his hand," Anderson said, still peering over Sato's shoulder."And my top priority is to find my friend," Langdon replied, frustrated.Both Anderson and Sato looked surprised.Sato and Anderson said nothing."Perhaps to a modern man," Langdon replied."Actually, ma'am," Langdon said, "I know a great number of historians who would disagree with you."Langdon inched toward the gruesome object.Langdon exhaled.Langdon

lakhasly.com © تم تلخيص النص بواسطة موقع لخصلي

shook his head.Langdon had asked himself the same question and the answer was unsettling.Langdon asked, incredulous."No, ma'am," Langdon said, pulling his sleeve down over his watch."I'm glad," Langdon said."You're right," Langdon said."Of course," Langdon said.Langdon's eyes shot back to the hand.Langdon could not bring himself to look at the hand."Yes," Langdon said.She hung up and turned back toward Langdon."I've never seen it before," Sato said.Sato seemed to consider this momentarily.I recommend--" "Where I got my information is not your concern," Sato interrupted, voice sharpening.Sato demanded.Sato demanded.Sato asked, glancing toward the hand on the floor."Let's just say I'm a skeptic," he told Sato.Sato arched her eyebrows.Sato eyed him.Sato's eyes narrowed.Sato pressed."So, Professor," Sato said, "your contention is that the man who left Peter's hand here knew all this?""Secret wisdom," Sato said with more than a hint of sarcasm in her voice.He lowered his head, looking at Sato now.We should really wait for forensics before we touch--" "I want some answers," Sato said, pushing past him.Sato spoke as if she'd had personal experience with this technique.Sato took off her glasses and studied him.I can't--" "Oh, for heaven's sake," Sato said, moving toward him.CHAPTER 21 The Apotheosis of Washington--a 4,664-square-foot fresco that covers the canopy of the Capitol Rotunda--was completed in 1865 by Constantino Brumidi."The Hand of the Mysteries is a formal invitation to pass through a mystical gateway and acquire ancient secret knowledge--powerful wisdom known as the Ancient Mysteries .Langdon said, "This Rotunda was once dominated by a massive sculpture of a barechested George Washington .Anderson moved away from Langdon and Sato, speaking quietly into his radio."This man who called me," Langdon told Sato, "was the only one who knew I was coming to the Capitol tonight, so whoever informed you I was here tonight, that's your man.And it clearly depicts George Washington being transformed into a god."Every time Langdon lectured on the symbology of America, his students were confounded to learn that the true intentions of our nation's forefathers had absolutely nothing to do with what so many politicians now claimed.Sato looked doubtful.America has a .hidden past

lakhasly.com © تم تلخيص النص بواسطة موقع لخصلي