

DAN
BROWN

AUTHOR OF *THE DA VINCI CODE*

THE
SECRET
OF
SECRETS

A NOVEL

ALSO BY DAN BROWN

Featuring Robert Langdon

Angels & Demons

The Da Vinci Code

The Lost Symbol

Inferno

Origin

Digital Fortress

Deception Point

THE
SECRET
OF
SECRETS

— A NOVEL —

DAN BROWN

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*To my editor and best friend, Jason Kaufman,
without whom writing these novels would be nearly impossible...
and a lot less fun*

The day science begins to study non-physical phenomena, it will make more progress in one decade than in all the previous centuries.

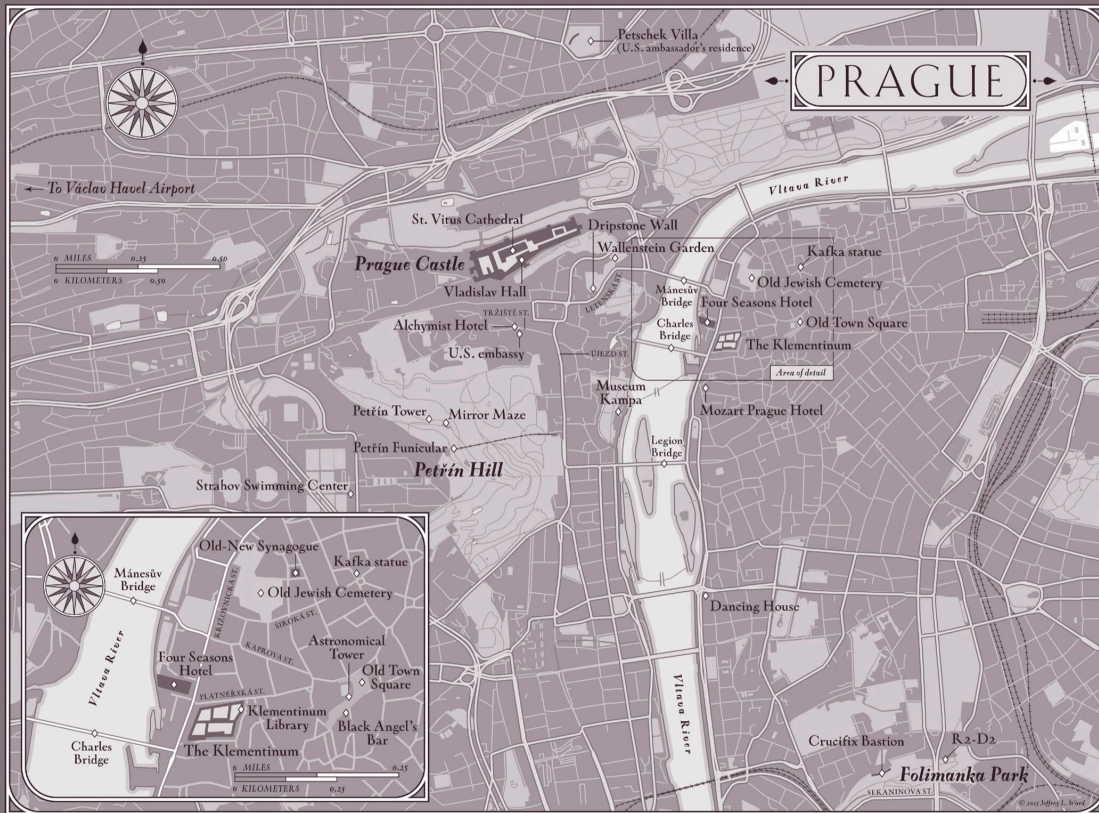
—NIKOLA TESLA

FACT:

All artwork, artifacts, symbols, and documents in this novel are real.

All experiments, technologies, and scientific results are true to life.

All organizations in this novel exist.



PROLOGUE

I *must have died*, the woman thought.

She was drifting high above the spires of the old city. Beneath her, the illuminated towers of St. Vitus Cathedral glowed on a sea of twinkling lights. With her eyes, if she still had eyes, she traced the gentle slope of Castle Hill down into the heart of the Bohemian capital, following the labyrinth of winding streets that lay shrouded in a fresh blanket of snow.

Prague.

Disoriented, she strained to make sense of her predicament.

I am a neuroscientist, she reassured herself. *I am of sound mind.*

That second statement, she decided, was questionable.

The only thing Dr. Brigita Gessner knew for certain at the moment was that she was suspended over her home city of Prague. Her body was not with her. She was without mass and without form. And yet the rest of her, the *real* her—her essence, her consciousness—seemed to be quite intact and alert, floating slowly through the air in the direction of the Vltava River.

Gessner could recall nothing from her recent past except a faint memory of physical pain, but her body now seemed to consist only of the atmosphere through which she was floating. The sensation was unlike anything she had ever experienced. Against her every intellectual instinct, Gessner could find only one explanation.

I have died. This is the afterlife.

Even as the notion materialized, she rejected it as absurd.

The afterlife is a shared delusion...created to make our actual life bearable.