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Hunting the King
Peter Clenott
Kunati
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Ever since Dan Brown published his bestselling *The Da Vinci Code* in 2004, thrillers about religious history have become a lucrative, if predictable, staple of the publishing world. To stand out from the stacks, it seems, would take an act of divine intervention.

Peter Clenott proves the skeptics wrong with an intelligent debut about the race to uncover the most prized archaeological find of all time: the tomb of Jesus Christ. The tale begins on the eve of the 2003 Iraqi invasion, when a museum curator stumbles across a cryptic guide to the messiah's remains, allegedly buried somewhere in the Iraqi desert. As the chaos of war ensues, the secret spreads across the globe, eventually reaching the protagonist, American archaeologist and biblical expert Molly O'Dwyer. With the backing of a Polish financier, Molly soon embarks on an action-packed adventure to find Jesus' tomb with the U.S. military, Iraqi fighters, and a slew of other "bad guys" on her trail.

Fans of intellectual thrillers and historical fiction will find a worthy new voice in Clenott. With the ease of a seasoned novelist, he takes readers from the bowels of Abu Ghraib and the streets of ancient Jerusalem to the stuffy offices of Boston academia and the desert enclave of a devout imam. Like *The Da Vinci Code*, *Hunting the King* is based on the premise that Jesus had a child by Mary Magdalene, with descendants that survive to this day. But by blending religious intrigue with contemporary politics and an eclectic cast of characters, Clenott manages to create a story that is entertaining and wholly his own.

The author's best invention may be Molly O'Dwyer, a genuinely likeable heroine who more than holds her own in a man's world. An ambitious scientist, she is also an observant Catholic whose heart and mind don't always agree. Her quest to find the truth without sacrificing Jesus' soul "and the soul of every other human being on this planet who believes in him" adds a provocative layer to the story. Molly's spiritual searching sometimes brings her into contact with supernatural phenomena, which may put off some readers. Her own natural skepticism provides a fitting counterbalance.

For fifteen years Clenott has worked in social services aiding victims of fire, flood, and

domestic abuse in Massachusetts. This is his first published book in a planned series featuring Molly O'Dwyer. Given such an auspicious start, the sequel can't come too soon.

Aimee Sabo