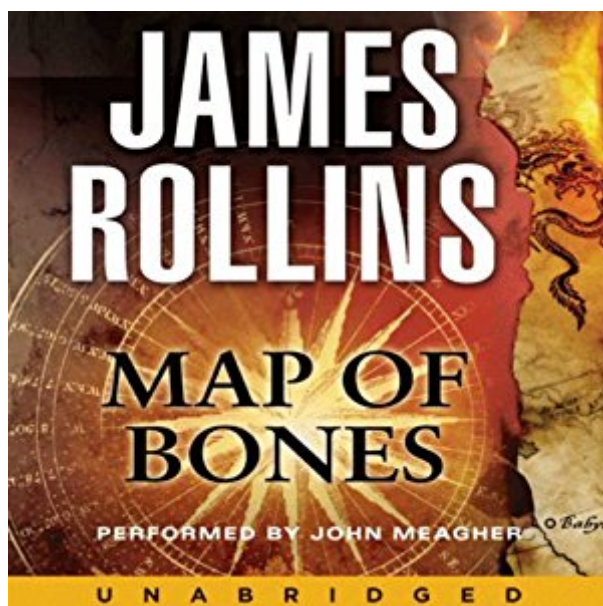


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# Map Of Bones: A Sigma Force Novel, Book 2



## Synopsis

The bones lead to ancient mysteries and present-day terror . . . To follow them means death. During a crowded service at a cathedral in Germany, armed intruders in monks' robes unleash a nightmare of blood and destruction. But the killers have not come for gold; they seek a more valuable prize: the bones of the Magi who once paid homage to a newborn savior . . . a treasure that could reshape the world. With the Vatican in turmoil, Sigma Force under the command of Grayson Pierce leaps into action, pursuing a deadly mystery that weaves through sites of the Seven Wonders of the World and ends at the doorstep of an ancient, mystical, and terrifying secret order. For there are those with dark plans for the stolen sacred remains that will alter the future of humankind . . . when science and religion unite to unleash a horror not seen since the beginning of time. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 14 hours and 2 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: HarperAudio

Audible.com Release Date: December 8, 2009

Language: English

ASIN: B00309U8BE

Best Sellers Rank: #96 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Mysteries & Thrillers > Espionage  
#504 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Fiction & Literature > Action & Adventure #908 in Books  
> Mystery, Thriller & Suspense > Thrillers & Suspense > Spies & Politics > Espionage

## Customer Reviews

This taut thriller about a conspiracy of (yet another) secret religious sect of the Catholic Church delivers all the punch of a well-plotted novel. Grayson Pierce, an operative for the U.S. top secret Sigma Force, is called to command a group of two other agents, Monk and Kat, to investigate the mysterious massacre of churchgoers in Cologne, Germany and the theft of the cathedral's relics, the bones of the Magi. They are assigned to work with an intel group from the Vatican, Monsignor Vigor Verona and his niece Rachel, a lieutenant in the Carabinieri Corps. The five quickly discover that the deaths in Cologne were carried out by the Imperial Dragon Court, a secret society dating back to the Middle Ages, and that the theft of relics in that church was just the beginning. Through

Vigor's vast knowledge of church symbolism, history, and architecture, and the others' combined education in chemistry, physics, and engineering, they begin to solve the mystery that could lead to Armageddon. Their lives are threatened at every turn as they race the ruthless members of the Dragon Court to uncover the next clue. Umberto Eco, with his novel *Foucault's Pendulum*, launched the literary premise of a complex religious conspiracy by a secret sect, and Dan Brown popularized it with *The Da Vinci Code*. James Rollins's book is much better than *The Da Vinci Code* because of its smooth writing and plotting and better integrated historical details. While he cannot compete with Eco in the writing and density of thought, Rollins's approach allows for a breathtakingly fast pace and incredible suspense. Sometimes the connections between the past and the riddle at hand are tenuous, although the information itself is usually fascinating.

I enjoyed Mr. Rollins' previous book, *Sandstorm*, so much that I was really looking forward to this one. Mr. Rollins' research was much sloppier in this book, as anyone with a Catholic school background will immediately notice. Indeed, the glaring and numerous inaccuracies about European history and Catholic tradition became such a distraction that I was unable to ever really get into this novel, even though it has a good story. For example, in attempting to establish that Rachel (the heroine) is some kind of archeological dynamo at the beginning of Chapter 2, he has her utter Dante's famous phrase, "Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'entrate!" ("Abandon all hope, ye who enter!") A learned "professor" marvels at Rachel's knowledge of the quote "in the original Latin no less" (page 37). This is an amazing bit of praise -- as any reader of 2004 break-away best seller, *The Dante Club* (by Matthew Pearl) will notice -- since that famous quote is in Italian -- not Latin! Sadly, throughout the book Rachel is straining to interject awkward classical Latin two-word phrases (obviously culled from a "famous quotes" book) even though the subject that she is discussing is medieval -- not classical -- in nature. The errors are not limited to problems with the author's use (and recognition) of foreign languages. The plot of this novel is centered around the theft and possession of certain holy relics (viz., the "Bones" in the title). You'd think the author would get his information right at least as it relates to relics, right? Wrong. In the opening chapters, he makes some sweeping pronouncements about the use of relics in Catholic church altars which, although they may be arcane rules, also have not been rules for years.

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