



Death of a Movie Star

Timothy Patrick

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Death of a Movie Star evolves past its satire to become an engaging examination of the nuanced people behind famous faces.

Timothy Patrick's *Death of a Movie Star* paints a vivid picture of the price of fame. It is a compelling and engaging tale of revenge, suspense, and romance.

Desperate actors hoping to make a comeback battle it out on the trashy hit TV show *StarBash*. Cassandra Moreaux signs up for the fourth season, setting the media and fans abuzz. Moreaux is a current A-lister, and her motivations for joining the competition aren't what they seem.

Lenora Danmore, an aging starlet turned producer, blacklisted Moreaux's mother during the communist witch hunts of the 1950s. While Moreaux attempts revenge against Danmore and anyone else involved, she becomes caught up in a rivalry with a fellow contestant, Brandi. All the while, Danmore's machinations both on and off the show set up an explosive showdown in her personal museum.

On the surface, *Death of a Movie Star* satirizes Hollywood and people's obsessions with celebrity. *StarBash* delves deeper by forcing the disgraced celebrities into progressively humanizing conditions, starting with a black-tie dinner and ending with a rapid-fire waitressing contest. One of the more compelling competitions tasks the contestants with reliving award ceremonies in front of disinterested bar patrons, which leads to a painfully real emotive performance from Moreaux that elevates the narrative, adding layers to her character.

Micah Bailey, the host of *StarBash*, perfectly encapsulates the dichotomy of the book. Superficially, he spouts hateful rhetoric towards the contestants, but he lives and dies by the very success of the show and by the inclinations of Danmore, his malicious boss. His unique connection to Danmore fleshes out his character and introduces some pathos, a trait that also helps him to forge a bond with Moreaux, highlighted through their back-and-forth sharing of favorite movies and documentaries.

Moreaux's revenge and *StarBash*'s outcome complement and build upon each other wonderfully. The TV show begins to humanize Moreaux; she relentlessly digs into Danmore's past at the same time, leading to increasingly dark tension and suspense. Both plots resolve with important character realizations and satisfying connections back to previous events.

Micah Bailey and Brandi have the strongest character arcs. Bailey begins the story as the quick-talking emcee. His relationships with Moreaux and Danmore reveal complicated motivations while laying fascinating groundwork for the showdown conclusion. At first blush, Brandi seems vapid, but her rivalry with Moreaux drives her forward realistically and sympathetically. While they are not the primary focus, these two often steal the spotlight.

Writing is stellar and polished, with an easy tone that balances humor with suspense and satire. Major characters start out as outlandish caricatures but become rounded and realistically grounded. The story arc ends in a satisfying and

unexpected manner, sowing the seeds for potential sequels.

Shattering the potentially formulaic TV framework, *Death of a Movie Star* evolves past satire into an examination of the people behind public faces. It is an engaging and surprisingly family-friendly thriller.

JOHN M. MURRAY (May 8, 2018)

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