Clarion Review

Mystery

Pray for Us Sinners: The Hollywood Murder Mysteries Book Seven
Peter S. Fischer
The Grove Point Press
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Four Stars (out of Five)

Fischer's latest murder-mystery installment shows his love for classic Hollywood names, secrets, and scandals.

Fascinating cover art heralds the further exploits of movie publicist Joe Bernardi as he tackles the larger-than-life personalities of Montgomery Clift and Alfred Hitchcock, as well as a sensational murder, in book seven of Peter S. Fischer's Tinsel Town whodunits.

For this installment in the *Hollywood Murder Mysteries* series, Bernardi travels to ultra-Catholic Quebec City to handle the press on Hitchcock's sleeper film, *I Confess*. Not only is Bernardi in for a clash of the titans between Clift and Hitchcock, but he also finds himself embroiled in an attempt to exonerate Jeanne d'Arcy, head of the Quebec Film Commission, for the murder of her ex-boyfriend, Daniel Bruckner, the man she threatened to kill right before he wound up dead. Now Bernardi has to hold the Warner Brothers set together and get d'Arcy off the hook in order to keep the Catholic bishops from shutting down the use of their church as a pivotal movie set.

Fischer clearly loves and respects classic Hollywood with its big names, big secrets, and big scandals. While the film plays second fiddle to the murder story, the reader gets glimpses into the personalities that Bernardi deals with as a media wrangler. When the relationship between Hitch and Clift seems to tense up, Bernardi goes to work dealing with reporters who write unflattering stories. Clift's homosexual dalliances are also brought to light in a scene where he winds up drunk in a bar that has no women's restroom. Bernardi swoops in and rescues him, keeping this event and many others out of the press. Even the reason for Clift's doldrums—Elizabeth Taylor's refusal to visit him in Quebec—keeps with the rumors of the time.

While this installment can be read as a stand-alone, there are several threads that run

through the series that may confuse readers who have not read the previous books. The writing style brings up black-and-white images of a gumshoe sitting in his office and reminiscing about a case he had in Quebec. The reader can almost see his tipped derby hat and a fat cigar in his hand as he retells the events of the case. It is a bit of a disconnect to realize that Bernardi is a slick publicist and not a stereotypical PI. The tone of the novel definitely reflects the latter.

For fans of old Hollywood and the classic mystery, this book serves its purpose. While the cover production is superb, there are many careless copy-editing errors in the text which can be slightly distracting to the reader. All in all, though, this is solid standard mystery fare.

Lynn Evarts