



The Secret Cardinal

Tom Grace

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Inspired by true events, masterful storyteller Tom Grace delivers his most provocative novel yet. In *The Secret Cardinal*, ex-Navy SEAL Nolan Kilkenny returns in an adventure that races from the grandeur of the Vatican across the vastness of Asia, ultimately involving China, the Mafia, and the conclave of cardinals that will elect the next pope. When Kilkenny is invited to Rome to consult on the functioning of the Vatican Library, he is still grieving the death of his wife and son and welcomes the distraction of the seemingly simple assignment. But Pope Leo XIV has a startlingly different task in mind for him. In a private audience, Kilkenny learns of an unreported atrocity committed against the underground Church in China and its link to Yin Daoming, the long-imprisoned Bishop of Shanghai who has served thirty years of a life sentence in a Chinese *laogai* for refusing to renounce the Church of Rome. The aging pope then reveals the dangerous truth about Bishop Yin, a secret that he has kept for over twenty years. Decades of diplomacy have failed to end China's persecution of the Catholics loyal to the pope, or to free Bishop Yin. The pope wants Yin free and asks Kilkenny to devise a plan to accomplish this seemingly impossible task. With help from the U.S. president, American Special Forces, and the C.I.A., he assembles a team of ten men and one woman that will use some of the most advanced weapons, aircraft, and computer technology to execute this extraordinary mission. Filled with fascinating detail about the history, politics, and people of China and the Roman Catholic Church, and the clever advanced technology and weaponry that have become hallmarks of a Tom Grace novel, *The Secret Cardinal* charges relentlessly toward an unexpected and unforgettable conclusion.

The Secret Cardinal Details

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From Reader Review The Secret Cardinal for online ebook

Horace Derwent says

laogai, toiling in a camp of gulag(kind of like those death camps in khmer rouge or nk, which has special features of chinese comms, it still exists here in china)...often the laogaiist is just the lifer in there, which means, they work hard to death

Michelle says

I loved the story of this book. It kept me engaged and wanting to read "just one more chapter" through most of the book. BUT, it is an action-type/military suspense story, and while the descriptions of the weapons, technology and such didn't really interest me, they were sort of necessary. If you're not familiar with Catholic lingo -- which I'm not -- that can get tedious as well. But there were some interesting things I learned about the Catholic church. The book's ending was very predictable, but I'd still say it was an enjoyable read overall. (Note: There are some graphic scenes depicting torture that really bothered me.)

D Levey says

Average

Mark says

Sadly, I've read the books in this series out of order (first #1 - Spyder Web, then this one... #5) which means certain secrets have been spilled. Sigh.

OTOH, the writing & plotting here are much tighter... which gives me hope for the other books in the series. I also like how the Roman Catholic church is not filled w/bad guys & secret cabals - a refreshing change from many novels of this type.

Deb says

The ailing and beloved Pope Leo meets with ex-Navy Seal Nolan Kilkenny to share his concerns about a imprisoned catholic priest in China. This priest is one the Pope has named a cardinal in his heart (not publically) but who he would like to have rescued. Soon after this meeting the pope dies and the cardinals meet to elect his successor--but the secret mission to extract the Chinese cardinal Yin Daoming continues. Will they be able to rescue Yin? And if they do and deliver him back to the conclave how will his appearance affect the election? Wanting to find out the answers to these questions will keep you reading.[return]A good thrill read, not much in the way of character development. I found the details about

the inner workings of the vatican and the china scenes interesting. I didn't realize that Nolan Kilkenny is a series character, but I would definitely be willing to try another in this series after reading this one.

Annette says

Plot in a nutshell: an aged pope authorizes a risky mission to free a Chinese bishop from the prison in which he has languished for 30 years. Everything's going just great until The Vatican springs a leak.

This is the first Tom Grace book I've picked up, and - fair warning - I did so because I heard the guy call in on Limbaugh's show. I enjoyed it: I found the Catholic characters very sympathetic, and the general theme about the underground church in China compelling. The action was decent, and the ending satisfying - if rather predictable.

At about 350 pages, this was a very quick read; Tom Clancy would have at least doubled the page count for a similar plot. This is the first major problem with the book: it should have been longer. The short chapters kept you turning pages, but there wasn't enough time to really develop any of the characters, do more than gloss over the many locations we were visiting, or truly build suspense. The characters did not, by and large, begin to escape two dimensions; the dialog often seemed forced; and some of the prose was wince-worthy when the author tried to get fancy with his similes and metaphors. In other words, it suffers from not having been written by Clancy!

Still, that author can only write so much (and even much of his current stuff is being farmed out, I notice), and this is far from the worst political / military thriller I've picked up, or even finished. Although few political-fic writers are left-wing radicals, it's clear that Grace's worldview is even closer to my own than many of his cohort. I may possibly go back and read one or two of his earlier novels.

TurtleneckGirl says

I read this title for my parish book club. Our group is made up of guys and gals, so it's only fair that we slip in a solid ASH every once in a while:) In *The Secret Cardinal*, ex-Navy SEAL Nolan Kilkenny is on a mission to rescue the long-imprisoned Bishop of Shanghai from a Chinese laogai. Based on the very real conflict between China and the Vatican, this jail-break thriller ultimately involves China, the Mafia, and the conclave of cardinals that will elect the next pope. Much of the techie stuff was over my head and I basically skipped an entire chapter because the rape and torture scenes truly disturbed me. I checked the Amazon reviews and found that most readers gave it five stars. Obviously, this is not my genre.

Jim says

I have read 4 of Tom Grace's first five books (I haven't read #4 *Bird of Prey*) featuring Nolan Kilkenny, ex-Navy SEAL turned computer geek and adventurer. *THE SECRET CARDINAL* (ISBN 978-1593154844, paperback, my copy retailed at \$7.95) is based partially on a true story.

Kilkenny is hired by Pope Leo XIV to upgrade the Vatican's computers (on the surface) but is really hired to go to China to rescue the aged Bishop of Shanghai from a prison. You really don't want to end up in a Chinese prison. The Pope had secretly made Bishop Yin Daoming a Cardinal, a real possibility. Kilkenny assembles a group of SEALs with Chinese backgrounds and features to undertake the rescue mission. The

mission uses all kinds of high tech weaponry and equipment. After they arrive in China, the mission takes on an unexpected urgency.

Pope Leo XIV suddenly dies and a papal conclave is called to elect a new Pope. Only the head of Vatican Intelligence, Cardinal Donohoe, and the Pope know of Kilkenny's mission. The machinations of Papal conclaves are as top secret as any top-level meeting of the CIA and NSA. Probably more so in this day and age. But there is a leak. The Chinese know that Kilkenny and his team are there. At the conclave, Bishop Yin emerges as a potential successor so Kilkenny's timeline is accelerated. Can Nolan and his team effect the rescue and return safely to the Vatican?

I look forward to reading more Tom Grace books.

GO! BUY! READ!

Fonch says

Dedicated with affection to the Writer Jorge Saez Criado.

Taking the chance that my waking customs are really odd. I try to write a review of the "Secret Cardinal". I must recognize that I heard very good references of the Tom Grace's novel, although I delayed to read it in Spanish the awaiting was worth.

This is a novel that I like me for several reasons 1° I like much more the Espionage, or the spy thriller style Frederick Forsyth, Daniel Silva, Tom Clancy, David Baldacci, Graham Greene, Bruce Marshall, John Le Carre, and Nelson de Mille (I will read soon). 2° I have liked the respect register that Grace writes about the Catholic Church more different than Dan Brown's novel or the literature of the suspect inspired in a pseudognostic promoted by powers of attorney and Unscrupulous publishings. This kind of novels was defined by the Spanish writer Juan Manuel de Prada <https://www.goodreads.com/author/show...> in his novel "White blackbird, black swan" <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/3...> as novel of witch alferéz. Despite everything I must do a little correction to Mr. Grace the Catholic Church has hardly opposed to the Evolution Theory. With all you could be critic with Charles Darwin in another issues as his defend the survival of the most capacity who provoke experience as eugenic. This kind of topics was supported by his relative Galton. 3° The knowledge of Grace of the Vatican is wide and deep he could be hired as guide of the Vatican. His presence is almighty you have the feeling that you are with him when you read part of his novel. I like very much the portrait of the fictional pope Leo XIV inspired in the charismatic Saint John Paul II. He had a very beautiful death (the Pope Leo XIV). 4° The Vatican intrigues are very good solved. He reminded me classics as "The Cardinal" by Henry Morton Robinson <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/1...> and "The death of the Pope" by Piers Paul Read <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/6...> although the English Catholic writer Piers Paul Read describes in the line of Graham Greene, Anthony Burgess and John Le Carre the trying of a terrorist attack in a Pope Conclave, and also the fighting between the traditionalist and the modernism theological the progressive. The trick of the DVD that Grace employed is brilliant. 5° Other virtue of the novel are the excellent characters of this novel, even his main character Nolan Kilkenny, who will take the rescue of the secret cardinal Kung as a personal crusade, who give back sense to his life after the death of his wife (Kelsey, and his son). The energetic Donohoe who reminded very much to the Catholic priest of the Henry Morton's novel "The cardinal". The computer man Griffin and his operation Bombadil has my approval, also the Chinese characters the rescuers, and the villains. 6° the novel was a pure show as James Bond movies, Bourne movies, and

impossible mission cycle. The end where a government escape the power of their hands (i do no say that it is posible) like me very much. 7º Kung, inspired in a real chinese character is something more than spiritual guide. 8º Tom Grace as Frederick Forsyth has a clear idea that who are good and bad it is a difference as Hollywood and the western european democracies that in ocassions has a dangerous liasons with evil goverments. Grace and Forsyth try to the escape the dictatorship of the relativism. He is not shy when he attacks and condemns the prosecution agains christians in China. China for his gooverment it is not a angelichal country that we think. Only because Nixon forged an alliance with them, and because his economy changed we cannot forget the death of 60 millions of persons in the Mao`s age, the barbarian of the only sn was promoted by Deng Xia Pin, the killing of the Tianamen`s square, the prosecution of the political opponents, and religious dissidents. The complicity of China in Darfur, and the protection of dictatorship Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, and North of Korea. The loigai are very hideously well described. Grace are perfect idea in his head the enemies are the yihadist and the comunist dictatorships in the world. 9º At finally although Grace mistakes in his prediction. Not all we can become Morris West, that in their novels "The shoes of the Fisherman" and "Eminence" <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/3...>
<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/5...>

In the first novel Morris West predict succesfully the arrival of a Slavic Pope (Cyril Lakota has a lot of in common with Kung). In "Eminence" Morris West hit the Saint John Paul II death conclave, althouh he commited a small mistake in this novel an aregentinian cardinal Rossi yield the Fisherman`s shoes to a progressive pope inspired in the cardinal of Milan Martino, but in the real life Bergoglio yield the position to Benedict XVI.

The solution purposed by Tom Grace it is the same that i thought when i was young and we are celebrating this conclave. I cheer up not being the unique person, who thought a similar Tom Grace`s solution. At finally an asian Pope could have get a massive conversion to the Asian people to the christianity. A same coclusion purposed Louis de Wohl in his biographical novel about Saint Francis Xavier "Set All Afire: A Novel of St. Francis Xavier" <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/4...> His idea was that with the conversion of China to the christianity, Asia, and especially Japan converted to the catholic religion. With this ideas i have in my crazy youth because i am a lover of the asian cultures, particularly Japan although i love very much (China, South of Korea and Vietnam). With all the Holy Spirit decided other thing, i leant my will to the Holy Spirit`s will.

The novel has a very small defaulties in Spain this novel would be described as americanada, and the plot of the mobster reminded me very much The Godfather III, very Gdfatheresque, more Coppola, than Mario Puzo, and this novel <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/2...> . But it does not matter because i enjoy as a kid :-). My dear user, it does not matter that you were a religious person, or not. You enjoy of pure testosterone and the taste of the bullets. Indeed this book was one of my favorites readings and a very nice surprise.

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Dedicado con afecto al escritor Jorge Sáez Criado.

Aprovechando, que no he podido dormir esta mañana (tengo el sueño alterado) aprovecho, para escribir esta crítica. Debo reconocer, que oí muy buenos informes de la novela de Tom Grace, que me fue muy recomendada, y aunque tardé en conseguirla en español la espera mereció la pena.

Es una novela que me ha gustado por varias razones. 1º Una de ellas es porque cada vez me gusta más la novela de espionaje, o thriller estilo Frederick Forsyth, Tom Clancy, David Baldacci, Graham Greene, Brce Marshall, John Le Carre, Nelson de Mille (al que leeré muy pronto). 2º Me ha gustado mucho el tono de respeto, que ha mostrado Grace hacia la Iglesia Católica, tan diferente de ese tipo de novelas de Dan Brown de la literatura de la sospecha pseudognóstica promocionada por los poderes fácticos, y por editoriales desaprensivas. Este tipo de novelas el escritor español Juan Manuel de Prada en su novela "Mirlo Blanco cisne negro" la calificó como novelas escritas por las bruja alfez. Aunque hay una pequeña corrección la Iglesia Católica a penas se opuso a la teoría de la evolución a diferencia del protestantismo y la Iglesia

Anglicana, por lo que esa minicrítica que lanza Grace no tiene lugar. De todas formas, si que se podría ser criticó con Darwin, y con el Darwinismo en cuestiones, como el intento de intentar una sociedad en la que sólo se reprodujeran los más aptos un modelo propuesto por Galton. 3º El conocimiento de Grace sobre el Vaticano es tan amplio, que podría ser contratado como guía del Vaticano. Parece, como si hubiera estado allí. También me ha gustado mucho el retrato del Papa León XIV inspirado en el carismático San Juan Pablo II. También es muy bella la forma en que muere. 4º Las intrigas vaticanas, por conseguir ocupar la silla de San Pedro, o el trono del pescador están muy bien hechas, y resueltas con todo esta novela puede compararse a clásicos como "El Cardenal" de Henry Morton Robinson, y "Muerte de un Papa" de Piers Paul Read, aunque en el caso de Read lo que se describía era un intento de provocar un atentado en un cónclave en una línea más cercana a Graham Greene, y John Le Carre, y también la lucha entre el sector tradicional, y el modernismo teológico integrado por unos cardenales progresistas. El truco del DVD, que emplea es brillante. 5º Otra virtud, que tiene son los excelentes personajes que tienen desde un Nolan Kilkeny, que se tomará el rescate de Kung, como un cruzada, que dé sentido a su vida, después de la muerte de su esposa, y su hijo. Al enérgico Donoher, que me recordó a los enérgicos sacerdotes del "Cardenal" de Henry Morton Robinson. Griffin el amigo informático fue un personaje de mi agrado. Así como los chinos, que participaron en la liberación de Kung. 6º En cierto sentido fue un gran espectáculo digno de producciones de la saga Bond, Bourne, y Misión Imposible. El desenlace está muy bien logrado. 7º El personaje de Kung está muy logrado, y es algo más que un guía espiritual. 8º También y esto es una de las cosas que más me gusta, y es que Grace a diferencia de Hollywood y ciertas democracias europeas tiene bien claro, quienes son los buenos, y quienes son los malos, y escapa del relativismo actual. No tiene ningún rubor en atacar la persecución religiosa, que sufren los cristianos en China. País, que por culpa de su gobierno no es tan arcangélico, como pensamos parece que sólo porque su sistema económica haya mutado se haya olvidado los 60 millones de muertos de Mao, la barbaridad de la ley del hijo único de Deng Xiao Pin, las matanzas de Tianamen, la persecución que sufren las minorías religiosas, la participación de China en horrores como Darfur, y la colaboración en el sostenimiento de dictaduras como la de Corea del Norte. La descripción que hace Grace del Laoigai es impresionante. Grace lo tiene claro a diferencia de los gobiernos occidentales europeos sabe que los enemigos de occidente son los yihadistas, y las dictaduras comunistas que quedan. 9º Por último aunque se equivocase en los pronósticos al fin y al cabo es difícil tener la capacidad de predicción de Morris West en las "Sandalias del pescador", y "Eminencia" dónde Morris West acertó con la llegada de un Papa Esloveno (de hecho Cyril Lakota tiene mucho en común con Kung) y en "Eminencia" fue capaz de predecir el conclave a la muerte de San Juan Pablo II, aunque se equivocó por apostar por un Papa progresista (un milanés inspirado en Martino), ya que el Cardenal Bergoglio cedió para que llegase al trono de San Pedro Benedicto XVI.

La solución, que plantea Grace, es la misma que pensé yo cuando ocurrió ese conclave. Me alegró de no haber sido la única persona que pensó en esta solución, que pensó en esta solución. Al fin y al cabo un Papa Asiático, podría haber conseguido que gran parte de Asia se hubiera convertido al cristianismo. A la misma solución llega Louis de Wohl en su biografía novelada de San Francisco Javier "El oriente en llamas". El objetivo de Francisco Javier era conseguir, que mediante la conversión de China, que Asia, y especialmente Japón se hiciera cristiana. En esas ideas estaba yo, que soy un amante de Asia (particularmente de Japón, aunque me gustan mucho también Corea del Sur, China y Vietnam). De todas formas el espíritu santo optó por otra opción, y ante él inclinó mi voluntad.

Tiene defectillos, quizá sea un poco lo que los españoles denominaríamos una americanada, y la trama de los mafiosos es demasiado Padrinesca (Padrino III, más que de las novelas de Puzo), y también a la novela "El invitado del Papa" de Vladimir Volkoff, pero es que todo se compensa, porque me lo pase como un enano. Así que sea una persona religiosa, o no mi querido usuario. Le animó a leerla, y como en las pelis de John Woo a disfrutar de la testorena, y del olor de las balas. No se arrepentirá. De hecho "El cardenal" de Tom Grace es una de mis favoritas lecturas de este año, y una gratísima sorpresa.

Sarah says

This is like Tom Clancy meets Catholic...how have I never read Tom Grace before? The pope dies and the conclave is just kicking off. In the midst of that, the Vatican has a secret rescue underway for an imprisoned cardinal (who no one else knows is a cardinal) in China.

It has suspense and catechesis, good dialogue and nice humor, page-turning plot and tear-jerking reality. I think this was written at about the time John Paul II died, so it was timely...and as we hover on the brink of a new papacy right now, it's also timely.

As I read it, I couldn't help but smile a bit at how much technology has changed in under a decade. There was email, but there was not texting or instant anything. The internet was dial-up based (unless you were CIA or something) and not anything like it is now. When they talk of sniffing out the cardinals' rooms, I had to laugh.

I really enjoyed this book and was glad it was a pick for our group. I'd highly recommend it as both an applicable read as we prepare for another conclave and a good book for the "fun reading" quotient.

Steve Foley says

Loved it, great plot, lots of action, great chase "scenes".

Skip says

Based loosely on Pope John Paul II's secret elevation of a Chinese bishop to cardinal, in this novel, a dying pope's last wish is to liberate a Chinese bishop, who has been imprisoned for 30+ years. Nolan Kilkenny is tasked with this daring rescue, and he assembles a team of special ops personnel of Chinese descent and takes prototype aircraft for his escape. Meanwhile, the caretaker pope is balancing the pressures of this mission, the election of a successor pope, and the treachery of a cardinal, who puts the mission at risk. The star of the novel is the Chinese cardinal, who is loved by all the people, whose lives he touches. Grace's endnotes are not to be missed.

Diane says

Fascinating adventure thriller. I couldn't put it down! The plot revolves around a dying Pope who enlists an ex-Navy SEAL to lead a team into China to free a Chinese bishop who has been in prison for 30 years. The book features appealing, and very human, characters. It also has a fast-paced plot that jumps back and forth between China and Rome. I learned a lot about Catholicism in China, and the author concludes the book (which is a work of fiction) with a helpful afterward describing the facts behind the story he concocted.

Joan says

Interesting, a 'big boys own' adventure in modern times built around the Catholic church and it's difficult relationship with China. Kept me reading but no surprises.

Read It Again Books says

Absolutely top-notch, fast-paced thriller set in Rome and China. I always watch for Tom Grace's books, they never disappoint. I admit that some of the earlier books made my eyes cross with the technical detail; not so with **THE SECRET CARDINAL**. I particularly enjoyed a thriller that showed reverence and respect for the Catholic church, in view of some of the garbage that's been published in the last several years. (Dan Brown, anyone?) **One cautionary note -there are a couple very tough scenes involving torture, advise skipping over them for the faint of heart - like me.** Well researched, excellent character development, careening storyline - what's not to like? Highly recommended!
