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'The Grail Conspiracy,' by **Lynn Sholes** and Joe Moore (Midnight Ink, 343 pages, \$14.95)

When we first picked up this book we figured we'd found another 'Da Vinci Code' clone. But whereas the search for and discovery of what actually constituted the Holy Grail occupied the whole of Dan Brown's mega-best seller, the grail in this fast-moving mystery is an actual cup and is handed over to our heroine, cable news reporter Cotton Stone, within the first few pages. In fact, though this book is labeled a 'Cotton Stone Mystery,' it's really more of a thriller with the authors doing very little to conceal any surprises.

We know Cotton is descended from a fallen angel, we know the cup is real, and we know that the bad guys want to use the blood of Jesus - sealed in the cup with beeswax - to clone a second coming. The only real surprise is seeing how and why Cotton stops them. Yet, somehow the authors manage to create an almost breakneck pace that keeps the reader turning pages waiting to see the greatest battle in history rejoined.

Tom and Enid Schantz write a monthly column on new mystery releases.

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