

FBI agent confronts heritage in movie

By Gerri Pare
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — A yuppie FBI agent is forced to confront his Native American heritage when assigned to a late 1970s murder investigation on a South Dakota badlands reservation in *Thunderheart* (Tri-Star).

Arriving on the reservation scornful of his one-quarter-Indian blood, agent Ray Levoi (Val Kilmer) is ordered by his cynical superior, Frank Coutelle (Sam Shepard), to wrap up the investigation quickly. Coutelle points to the chief suspect, militant traditionalist Jimmy Looks Twice (John Trudell), as the likely killer.

Tribal police officer Walter Crow Horse (Graham Greene), however, is skeptical of Coutelle's snap conclusions and nudges Ray toward a more open-minded inquiry — including considering such mystical notions as listening to the wind.

Initially hostile, Ray finds himself



TriStar Pictures

Val Kilmer (left) portrays an FBI agent sent into the South Dakota Badlands to investigate a murder on an Indian reservation in *Thunderheart*. Kilmer confronts Graham Greene, a rebellious tribal cop who helps him realize that he is a pawn in a plot that threatens not only the spiritual bonds but the traditions of the reservation.

surprisingly impressed with the wisdom of the ancient medicine man (Chief Ted Thin Elk), the tribe's native spirituality and the courage of Dartmouth-educated activist Maggie Eagle Bear (Sheila Tousey).

Eventually, evidence of an organized conspiracy makes him question his rock-solid patriotic beliefs and consider his Native American heritage anew — in spite of daunting personal consequences.

On the surface, director Michael Apted's murder mystery stalls and stagnates. The investigation unfolds ploddingly with Shepherd's character disappearing for long stretches as Ray is reluctantly exposed to a mystical Native American mind-set.

Due to recurring rough language, a few grisly shots of dead bodies and several shootouts, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

Author holds that love can win out over grief in book exploring different 'masks' of death

Love is Stronger Than Death, by Peter J. Kreeft, Ignatius Press (1979); 141 pages; \$8.95.

By Father John J. Philipps
Guest contributor

If my physician were one day to tell me that my years of good health were over — and somberly pronounce my condition as "terminal" — I would surely pack Peter J. Kreeft's *Love is Stronger than Death* before my trip to the hospice.

That the author is a professor of philosophy at Boston College is evident from his text, generously endowed with carefully annotated quotes from Kierkegaard, Aquinas, Sartre, Aristotle, and many others. The author of many other books on apologetics and spirituality, Kreeft's familiarity with and use of the Scripture qualifies this book as a valuable spiritual book.

And that he suffers from a terminal illness, as he acknowledges in the Introduction, gives his work credibility and a unique authenticity.

Love is Stronger than Death is not one of those ubiquitous "how-to" books — how to die. Also, the book does not delve into the feelings and attitudes that surface through the various stages of dying, nor does it deal with ethical questions such as the "right-to-die," or what determines death in a human being. It is also not a legal, medical, or

psychological treatise on death.

The author skillfully blends philosophy and religious conviction, as he develops his thesis that love is stronger than death under five different "masks" of death: Enemy, Stranger, Friend, Mother, and Lover.

Don't read the book hastily. If you own your copy, you will want to have your highlighter and pencil handy on every page.

His final chapter, however, makes his thesis most convincing. That is when he speaks not as the philosopher, professor, spiritual writer, or "terminal" patient, but as Peter Kreeft — a father who learns that his little 5-year-old girl has a brain tumor.

His book, Kreeft claims, was written before the "close encounter," not because of it. Although the anecdote does have a happy ending, it proves conclusively that love is indeed stronger than death.

Three groups of readers will profit from this insightful book: the terminally ill; those who minister to the terminally ill; and those grieving a loved one's death.

Really, the book should be read by anyone who thinks he or she might die someday. "Life is always fatal," Kreeft writes. "Nobody gets out of it alive."

Father Philipps is pastor of St. Bridget/St. Joseph Church in East Bloomfield.

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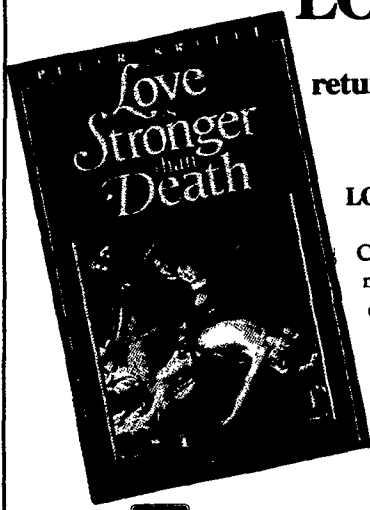
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