Clarion Review

General

Man of the People
T. Spencer Adams
AuthorHouse
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Four Stars (out of Five)

Timing is everything, and T. Spencer Adams's Frank Capra-style story of a common man of common sense being catapulted into the race for U.S. president is well timed. Like Capra's Depression-era film classics *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*, Adams's *Man of the People* is a welcome escape. If the author's alter ego, J.T., is not quite the Jimmy Stewart or Gary Cooper characters we love, he is not far from being the modern-day equivalent of an everyman.

Adams's hero is flawed, with disappointment and sadness and doomed relationships in his past, and his failings make him all the more credible. Although uncomfortable with technology, the fifty-something J.T. stumbles into the world of blogging, putting out on the web what he believes are basic, common-sense ways to deal with myriad problems plaguing modern America. His ideas go viral, and J.T. attracts the local media and gets booked on David Letterman and Larry King. These appearances help propel him to celebrity status, attract the attention of professional politicians, and eventually gain him a spot on the presidential ticket of the National Libertarian Party.

Politicians of every stripe seek to use, abuse, or undermine J.T. for their own aims. The most corrupt and most vile is the Republican National Committee boss Robert DeWhitt, who stops at nothing to humiliate J.T. The snarling, slimy DeWhitt even hires Terry Kay O'Donnell, who "looks like a million bucks before taxes," to seduce J.T. in hopes of uncovering the skeletons in his closet. Lonely, divorced J.T. falls for the hired bombshell.

If at times the story is too pat and predictable, it is nevertheless satisfying. Adams devotes a lot of the book to his political beliefs and theories, but he is careful to take a very centrist and uncontroversial middle ground. Although drawn into the Libertarian Party, he holds back from espousing any radical views, instead choosing a path that is based on compromise

and shared values. Adams attacks politicians who see compromise as a dirty word, or an admission of defeat, and, who by refusing to work together "for the common good," have turned American politics into "a combination of *Let's Make a Deal* and *Liar's Pokers*."

Adams does not pretend that his character or his ideas will solve the world's problems, but he does put forward a refreshing call for people to set aside their differences and find a way to work together. Except for some over-long passages that read like a political blog, Adams keeps the story moving. At times, his characters come perilously close to being caricatures, but Adams shows just enough restraint to keep them from becoming stereotypes.

Man of the People is a clean, quick, and entertaining read. Adams offers readers a good fantasy, while also making a refreshing call for common sense and compromise in these increasingly contentious and polarized times.

Mark G. McLaughlin