Clarion Review

General

Roll the Dice
Wayne Avrashow
To Be Determined
978-0-615-75649-3
Three Stars (out of Five)

It's not easy for a rock music idol to be taken seriously as a candidate for the United States Senate, especially when he runs as an Independent, challenging the domination of the Republican and Democratic parties. But that's exactly what Tyler Sloan asks the people of Nevada to do: take him seriously.

Sloan, the protagonist in Wayne Avrashow's *Roll The Dice*, decides to try to fill the Senate seat of a family friend who dies in office. Dodging barbs from the media and from rival political parties, Sloan tries hard to maintain his integrity and natural charisma. It's difficult, though, when his ex-wife continues to turn to drugs and alcohol and when his campaign manager is caught up in a case of tax fraud. Sloan's growing attraction to his cute, engaged-to-be-married media advisor doesn't help, either. It's a long, tough road, but Sloan attacks it with bravery and humor.

Much of the text is dialogue, and Avrashow shows a strong ability in using the back-and-forth nature of the conversations to deliver a fast-paced, intriguing portrait of a political campaign:

"'I'll just do what's right … for Nevada,' he pointed to Martino and added with a self assured smile, 'and for you.'

"'Not bad,' Martino nodded. 'Not bad.'

"'Both parties are equally polluted, I'll find solutions that work and not be restricted by ideology.'

"'Don't keep that between us, I liked that answer.'"

Occasionally readers will find a stiffness to the characters. Avrashow might consider lingering with his cast's personalities in order to delve deeper into their idiosyncrasies and desires. Several characters—Sloan's lawyer, Grant Zimmer; his campaign manager, Tony

Martino; and the president of the United States, Bret Reed—are meant to be strong individuals with their own unique ways of helping or hurting Sloan's chances, but too often they feel similar to each other, like characters plucked from a dictionary of clichés. By tweaking their flavors just a bit, Avrashow could offer readers a more interesting array of human behaviors.

Avrashow should be commended for weaving subplots into the major story line. The family drama and tax crimes add depth and variety to the text, and Avrashow is a deft enough writer to fold them in without disrupting the flow of the narrative.

One aspect of the book that might detract from readers' enjoyment is the repetitive nature of some of the scenes. Sloan is often at speaking events where the public and his advisers learn that he is at his best when he talks from his heart and relies on the showmanship he learned as a rock star. Too often the author tries to show that all the media cares about is gossip, while Sloan would simply like to speak about the issues. Far fewer examples would establish the pattern sufficiently.

Readers interested in the ever-turbulent political landscape will find much to enjoy in Avrashow's examination of a modern-day Senate race.

Andi Diehn