Clarion Review

Humor

SNAFU: A Tale of Presidential Election and a Girl
Simon Plaster
Mossik Press
978-0-615-66621-1
Four Stars (out of Five)

With polls showing the "Presidential Election to be as tight as a prom dress," and the Electoral College on the brink of dissolution by constitutional amendment, the fate of the country comes down to how one "small, dirt-ball town" in a remote rural county in Oklahoma votes. The critical issue over which this tiny electorate will determine the next man to sit in the Oval Office? "Pot holes," as one voter stridently explains. "Last month I broke the axel of my Dodge Ram not six blocks from my own house."

In his outrageous redneck political satire, somewhat akin to *Mayberry RFD* meets *Swing Vote*, Simon Plaster takes a Will Rogers-like tack to poke fun at politics, politicians, and the system by which Americans elect their leaders. At times silly but always charming, Plaster has great fun with the denizens of Okmulgee County, a real place situated south of Tulsa and smack-dab between Okfuskee and Muskogee. Plaster populates his novel with a familiar stereotypical cast of comedic standbys, from Wanda with the double-wide, whose response to the question of what every woman wants is "a brand new set of unused tires," to Henryatta, the local journalist whose idea of a special treat is the "buttered biscuit breakfast" at the Pigout Palace Buffet.

Plaster, refreshingly, does not have an identifiable political agenda. Republicans and Democrats both look stupid in this book, as their respective choices for vice president illustrate. While the GOP challenger chooses a man who wears his bloody butcher's apron when stumping, the incumbents select the "Happy Homeware Huck-Finn-ster," traveling salesman Virgil Carter, an Okmulgee native who never finished elementary school and honestly admits that he is "not the sharpest picket on the chain-link fence."

The antics of three county commissioners named Moe, Larry, and Curly lend some nostalgic amusement to the story, as do the homespun quips about men who "chase women like a hound after rabbits." All that's missing are warm Dr. Peppers and gas-station Moon Pies, and

this could be an episode of *Larry the Cable Guy*, albeit one tinged with the political sarcasm found in *The Daily Show* or *The Colbert Report*.

Oklahomans bear the brunt of the redneck gags, but residents of the Sooner State may take some comfort in knowing that Plaster is not some liberal, East Coast establishment type, but is at least a neighbor from Odessa, Texas. Being made fun of by a fellow citizen of the Southwest may soothe the feelings of Sooners whose feathers Plaster ruffles—though the author would be advised to give Oklahoma and especially the county of Okmulgee a wide berth next time he travels north.

Comedy is hard to deliver and harder to write, and political satire harder still, but Plaster bravely saunters through and stays on course for nearly two hundred pages. The novel is not perfect, and there are times when the humor falls flat or is either too predictable or so outrageous as to strain belief. Yet even in its weakest chapters, there is almost always a smile, or even three, to be found somewhere on each page. Who can ask more of a comedic novel than that?

Mark McLaughlin