Clarion Review

General

Taking Over the Government of the United States
Gene Cowen
BookSurge
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Three Stars (out of Five)

Taking Over the Government of the United States is a fun and fast-paced story that explores what happens when there is a plot to take over the presidency from the inside. Along the way, readers will be engrossed in plot twists and intrigued by interesting historical details about Washington, D.C., Author Gene Cowen certainly has the credentials to give insight to the history of the city and its denizens, having served as chief of staff to a senator as well as a deputy assistant in President Nixon's administration. His first book, *My Life, a Novel*, was part memoir, part historical account of his years in the capital, a unique melding of genres.

In this latest book, Cowen creates the fictional character of Jerry Jones, assistant to a senator, who is investigating why a member of congress is offering to bribe him to stop a nomination for vice president. The reader is taken on a roller coaster of blackmail, murder, and political slights of hand.

The book explores some engaging issues including government corruption and the possibility of government representatives being used as weapons by terrorists. The plot structure is strong, and the author provides a surprise at every turn. However, the story lacks sufficiently developed characters to anchor the epic themes of this story, resulting in a book that lacks seriousness and believability. Jerry's faults, like those of his cohorts in Congress, are cliché and seemingly limited to acquiescence of an adulterous culture pervaded with a willingness to undercut others for political gain. The story's villain is amorphous, and he sneaks up on the reader in such a way that the climax is easy to miss.

On the plus side, Cowen's details about Washington add a level of historical meaning to a story that may in some ways seem superficial. For example, it is noted that, under British rule, foreign service personnel in the district earned additional "sub-tropical hardship" pay.

Overall, *Taking Over the Government of the United States* is a worthwhile read,

complete with a few tolerable shortcomings. It will interest readers looking for an exciting story that explores a political capital that is infested with scandal and terrorism.

Gabriela Worrel