

## Running for the House

**Howard Kleinhendler**

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*With humor and a breakneck pace, this excellent political thriller is sure to entertain mystery fans.*

Howard Kleinhendler's book, *Running for the House*, is a tense, well-crafted thriller that travels from a political shindig in Texas to a beach in Mogadishu to a Russian mob hideout.

Michael Gordon's initial motivation to run for public office is bolstered by several powerful politicians, and when he discovers the reason why, his whole life is torn apart.

Kleinhendler's debut novel has the look and feel of the popular Netflix series *House of Cards*. The power brokers in Washington, DC, call all of the shots, and even if their motives are sketchy, the people under their thumbs will do what must be done to keep in their good graces. Add in biological weapons and the NSA, and the power mix is complete.

The plot is the real star of this book. The story line is fast-paced and very clean. The editing is tight, and the narrative charges ahead at a breakneck pace. The early description of Gordon's trip to a powerful judge's ranch in Texas for a pig roast is a study in the absurd. Gordon, then simply an attorney from New Jersey considering a run for the House, shows up with his shiny loafers and big city ways and is stunned and appalled at the judge's casual treatment of the case they are supposed to discuss. This scene sets the tone for the rest of the novel, as Gordon finds himself in increasingly surreal situations.

Another strength of this book is Gordon's character. While "moral and ethical Washington outsider vs. the corrupt political machine" is an overused plot device, Kleinhendler elevates this concept with Gordon's characterization. Gordon's comments often come across as humorous, even when they're actually quite serious. This wry look at the political system helps mold Gordon's character, and makes the story even more interesting:

*"You may be bait for a bigger project."*

*"Bait? For what?"*

*"For a covert mission that requires someone with unique access to government secret installations."*

*"But I don't have access to shit. I can't even get into the executive bathroom at my firm."*

*Running for the House* is a thriller that any fan of mystery or political intrigue stories will thoroughly enjoy.

Kleinhendler's take on politics and power will give just about any reader an excellent way to while away an afternoon with a book.

LYNN EVARTS (November 10, 2014)

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