



Boomsday

Christopher Buckley

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Outraged over the mounting Social Security debt, Cassandra Devine, a charismatic 29-year-old blogger and member of Generation Whatever, incites massive cultural warfare when she politely suggests that Baby Boomers be given government incentives to kill themselves by age 75. Her modest proposal catches fire with millions of citizens, chief among them "an ambitious senator seeking the presidency." With the help of Washington's greatest spin doctor, the blogger and the politician try to ride the issue of euthanasia for Boomers (called "transitioning") all the way to the White House, over the objections of the Religious Right, and of course, the Baby Boomers, who are deeply offended by demonstrations on the golf courses of their retirement resorts.

Boomsday Details

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From Reader Review Boomsday for online ebook

Jessica says

Couldn't really stomach this, though I did finish it. Twenty-nine year old Cassandra Devine is a PR professional and blogger who proposes a solution to the increasing Social Security debt: give Baby Boomers incentives to kill themselves by the age of seventy. She calls it "voluntary transitioning."

I loved the premise, and I'm usually all for political satire, but I just didn't care for the writing. I think this is a good example of how everyone talks in the novel:

"Ask yourself, Do you really want that douchebag Randy Jepperson in our face? I'd rather eat caterpillars off a hot sidewalk. Now look at him - Pied Piper to the just-out-of-diapers generation. He's milking this thing like a Jersey cow. His PR guy, Tucker, has his fingerprints all over the udder. The girl, Devine - she works for him. This thing's more incestuous than an Arkansas family reunion. I say get out the ten-foot pole and don't touch it."

If that's your thing, cool. It's not mine. I think my eye muscles got tired of rolling around the time Cassandra Devine says "I'm calling on every member of my generation to take their iPods out of their ears and send the U.S. government a message. Not a text message, either." Ugh.

I found myself thinking that if I lived in a world where everyone talked like characters in a Christopher Buckley novel, "voluntary transitioning" wouldn't look so bad.

Ensiform says

In the not-so-distant future, America teeters on the brink of economic disaster as the baby boomers start retiring. Enter beautiful young ex-Army-turned PR flak, coulda-gone-to-Harvard-but-Daddy-spent-the-tuition-money crusading blogger Cassandra, who on her blog suggests that Baby Boomers voluntarily kill themselves for tax breaks, saving Social Security costs. When young people take to the streets, the ineffectual president (who happens to be in cahoots with her father, who is now a software tycoon and party patron) makes her an enemy, as does a TV preacher. But the cause is taken up by a young congressman who shares an eyebrow-raising past with Cassandra, and soon people are starting to talk about actually passing the "Transition" bill into law.

I wasn't too impressed with the previous Buckley I read, *Supreme Courtship*, and this book is of about the same weight. Buckley's satire, as I said about that book, is the toothless satire of the contented conservative shooting blanks at straw men. The fact that his heroine must be "hot" and blonde "with liquid, playful eyes and lips" shows how concerned he is with serious ideas. In over 300 pages, none of the characters seem very interesting, and the dialogue at times is positively ridiculous; his ideas about software are equally out of touch. His scenarios are mildly amusing but not actually comic, and he has no real point to make about Washington, just a modern modest proposal. Light, frothy, somewhat arch, but it lacks punch.

Neil Pittman says

In this book the subject changes from the smoking lobby to the Baby Boomers eating up all of our resources

as they retire without having given anything back. The "worst generation" contributed nothing during their lives, and now that they're "wrinklies" they want their gimme-gimme-gimme consumerism to be subsidized on the backs of the X'ers and millenials. Whether you agree with this or not, Christopher Buckley lambastes lobbies, boomers, religion and politicians. Even if these targets aren't on your hit list, you have to enjoy Buckley's work as a satirist. I haven't heard somebody so succinctly eviscerate a target since the Monty Python line "Marx claimed he was offside."

Manny says

The British newspapers the last few days have been full of dire figures about our national balance sheet. Officially, Britain owes £903B, which already doesn't sound good. But, if you take into account the fact that a large proportion of Britain's pension obligations aren't funded, the number goes up to a terrifying £5T - about another £200K per household. One article said that, in order to balance the books, we would need to raise taxes by 30%.

Clearly that isn't going to happen. The problem is that everyone's suddenly woken up to a rather unpleasant truth. It's been an article of faith for a long time that economic growth is good: you rely on the fact that people in the future will be richer than they are now, and borrow against it. Alas, it turns out that this is just another version of the standard pyramid scheme, and has the same weakness; things go fine for a while, but in the end you run out of suckers to recruit. If you actually happen to know something about macroeconomics, please don't point out all six errors in what I just said. I know I'm ignorant. All the same, I don't think it's completely at variance with reality.

So what are we going to do? I'm afraid I have no idea. But Christopher Buckley presents an imaginative solution! It would be so convenient if all those expensive and useless pensioners just went and killed themselves. Perhaps, with the right tax incentives, they could be persuaded to do so?

It's really funny. Not quite as funny as *Doctor Strangelove*, though it isn't Buckley's fault that unfunded pension obligations aren't as amusing as global thermonuclear war. He makes the most of his material.

Bookmarks Magazine says

Once again, political satirist Christopher Buckley (*Thank You for Smoking*) delivers a firecracker of a novel that explodes with imagination, irony, and wit. Buckley sometimes overexplains, to show off how smart he is, but he is discussing Social Security here. Besides boring subject matter, the novel contains a completely over-the-top premise and a lead character that strains credibility. So the overexplanation works, for the most part, because it evokes laughs. "If you're looking for a lighter, frothier version of Tom Wolfe," says the *Los Angeles Times*, "*Boomsday* is your ticket." Also of note: as the first release of the new publishing imprint Twelve, *Boomsday* comes packaged in an eye-catching, pop-art package.

This is an excerpt from a review published in Bookmarks magazine.

Becky says

3.5 stars

A word of warning: I'm sick, hopped up on cold meds, and barely able to keep my eyes open - but my stupid brain won't let me relax until I have a review on the books and I can't move on to another book until I have officially finished this one. Even though I can totally read several books at once, but if I am finished with a book, I can't start a new one until I'm FINISHED... which means reviewed in this crazytown brain of mine. So, you know. It might be more rambling and incoherent (and germy) than usual. I recommend thorough handwashing and some Purell after reading.

Anyway. I don't remember which came first - my buying this book, or my watching Thank You For Smoking. I think I was drawn to the bright cover in any case, but after seeing TYFS (which I love) I definitely wanted more of Buckley's work.

So I read this one, and... Ehh. I liked it. It was funny and smart and all of the things that I expected. But I think this is a case where I like the adaptation better than the text... well, I'm assuming, since as far as I know this one was not adapted. But comparing BD to the movie version of TYFS I can see how the style of Buckley's writing would adapt, and I think it works better in film. There are just so many asides and interruptions in the text, and in a visual medium you can actually have and follow those interruptions in a cut scene or pause-with-voiceover or whatever you want to use, and it works. In text... it kinda works out to be really rambling and long sentences that I wish were more streamlined.

But still... there were some great moments in the book and Buckley's timing is pretty good as far as the humor goes.

The main point of the book is the conflict between Social Security (the program) and the people who will actually end up paying for it because of how mismanaged the program has been. It was pretty interesting, and has definitely made me regret being born... but what can you do?

I actually found some of the other things in the book to be more terrifying than my going broke because Grandpa wants to play 3 rounds of golf a week. Things that surely exist but I was happier not knowing about. Like how government actually works (FML), Spider Repellent (which can delete any info found with certain search terms. "If it ain't on Google, it doesn't exist."), and RIP-Ware (which predicts, accurately, how long someone will live based on their DNA and lifestyle habits... and can obviously be exploited by any company in business to make a profit off of your life or death.).

The characters were interesting and I liked them, even the morally repellent ones. Well, hell, especially them.

Overall, I liked this, but I wish the writing was a little less staccato. OK. Yeah, that's about it. I'm going to take a nap now.

Sharon says

Will the Baby Boomers bankrupt the country and leave their children and grandchildren in hopeless debt? Why not "incentivize" suicide? This Swiftian solution--and the author even lets his character refer to Swift--is proposed by Cassandra Devine, an "under-30" who, through a series of odd events, has found her niche as a political consultant and blogger. C. Buckley knows the worlds of politics and K Street extremely well, and

he uses his knowledge brilliantly. Although categorized as satire, this book is perhaps a bit too close to the truth of American politics--can one satirize the absurd?--but the situations and dialogue keep it light. If only conversations in real life sounded this good! The ending is rushed but realistic in its "politics as usual" feel. Great antidote to the endless updates on presidential politics.

Kelly Fugate says

LOL Political satire! Premise of a decade ago seemed over-the-top; however, considering our looming presidential election, ridiculously familiar. I suggest you get a copy and read it this weekend. After all, laughter is the best medicine and I anticipate we're all going to need a big dose on Wednesday. Intra-generational fun for the family - in case your Thanksgiving dinner "discussions" need punching-up.

The Book Maven says

Holy crap. This book was so FREAKING GOOD.

The time and place: America, a few years down the road. Prime rates are at 18 percent. Inflation is at thirty percent. Foreign countries are refusing to loan America any more money. The United States is at war with six areas, including Quebec, and the National Guard is spread so thin that it is now safe for other countries to invite the U.S. to declare war.

And in the midst of all these financial crises, 77 million Americans--Baby Boomers all--are beginning to retire. And Social Security will go bankrupt within three months if this happens.

The solution? Hike the Social Security tax to 30%, applicable to everyone under 30.

Cassandra Devine is a disgusted and disgruntled blogger who is very unamused at the prospect of paying out the nose to support the "ungreatest generation." (Her words.) Her solution? Offer all sorts of tax breaks to people who kill themselves before the age of 70.

In no time, Cassandra is propelled into the limelight. Is she a savior or a she-devil? Depends on who you ask. But one thing is for certain--once a one-legged senator with presidential aspirations gets a hold of her and her issue, there's no telling how far they will be able to ride this train.

Appeal elements: fast-paced and witty plot, detailed and amusing characters, and sharp, take-no-prisoners dialogue. While the plots and even the tone are completely different, I would recommend John Grisham's *A Time to Kill* for someone wanting a read-alike; the witty, dry dialogue is very similar, and the story offers compelling backstories about the characters, just as *Boomsday* does. As well, try *Nature Girl* or *Skinny Dip* by Cark Hiassen.

David says

Some of the most laugh out loud funny satire I've ever read.

Monotony Boy says

Wow... I read this whole thing thinking that, maybe I just didn't get something. I was wrong. I should have quit at 33%.

Supposedly a political satire; this books says nothing valuable about politics, society or culture, and is not in the least bit funny. I don't think I even slipped out a chuckle the whole time, much less laughed. Boomsday is filled with plenty of Ivy League-rs who have never heard of political science, game theory, and have no idea how to say anything wittier then the F word.

The characters lack any semblance of substance. The argument in defense of this is likely, 'this is supposed to be satire!' Sure, I get that. But the characters are not ironic symbols of modern American culture. even when they by all rights should be, they fall short of the mark.

Cassandra Devine, despite drinking 8 red bulls a day is described as attractive... one of the first stupid things you come across. Thant and her love of Ayn Rand. aside from that she uses a computer and doesn't have a personality, yet is the most popular person in the blogosphere...

When they do show some sort of change, characters seem to do so out of the blue, with no foreshadowing. Just changing their behavior with little or no reason whatsoever. The Protagonist, Devine, seems to jump straight into a relationship with Senator Randolph Jepperson, despite a complete lack of professional or personal chemistry. Well, at least he has money, I suppose... that's commentary-esque, right?

At some point while reading, I stopped to look at the Writers' credentials, thinking the author was a disaffected teen who won a writing contest.

Yuck, Just yuck.

Samantha says

Two words: Effing hilarious!

I picked this up in the Midway airport on my way back from Chicago and wow...what a wonderful find!

Picture it: 77 million Baby Boomers are on the verge of retirement, which is putting a strain on the already floundering Social Security system. The US economy is in the toilet and Congress just passed a bill raising Social Security taxes 30% for the under thirty crowd.

Enter Cassandra Devine. She's a PR spin doctor at a high-profile Washington, D.C firm that specializes in scraping the muck of crooks until they shine. In her spare time, she operates a blog called CASSANDRA that focuses primarily on spewing vitriol at Baby Boomers and inciting riots at Florida golf courses.

There are many wonderful characters in this scathingly funny book: the blue-blooded senator who rides Cassandra's "Voluntary Transitioning" platform all the way to a run at the presidency; the conniving and back-stabbing presidential chief of staff who goes to any lengths to make his boss look good; the billionaire software mogul who has a tennis pro wife and delusions of grandeur (and who also happens to be Cassandra's father); the pompous and portly Southern Bible-beater who waxes poetic about the sanctity of human life (and who may or may not have killed his own mother); and last, but not least, the incomparable and selectively blind PR wizard (Cassandra's boss) who doesn't care how morally bankrupt his clients are as

long as the pay is good.

All of these characters come together in a fantastically-crafted story about the generation gap, politics, religion, and the art of spin. This is the first Christopher Buckley book I've read, but if his others are as good as this one, I'll definitely read them.

My only complaint? The ending was a little too abrupt.

D.L. Morrese says

This cynical farce of American politics includes a cast of disreputable characters. There are several ambitious politicians, a self-appointed spokeswoman for her generation on a crusade against Social Security (which she seems to have only a superficial understanding of), a fundamentalist Baptist minister (crusading against just about everything), and a slimy PR executive (who may be the most rational of the bunch). The people in this book are they type you would be best off avoiding, if possible, insofar as all, despite their differences, share one characteristic -- that of negotiable integrity.

The lack of an admirable protagonist, however, does not prevent the book from being likable. It's fun in a rather juvenile way, a low comedy in which the characters continually make and break agreements, deceive, lie, manipulate, betray and backstab one another. The characters are not thoroughly detestable, and we can sympathize at times, but mostly we laugh at their misfortune because, after all, they're really not all that likable. What is amazing is that any of them ever buy the BS the others are trying to sell to them. They should know better.

I won't say this is a great book, but insofar as my overall opinion of politics and politicians tends toward the cynical side, I got a laugh or two out of it. In my more rational moments, I doubt Washington insiders are as lacking in integrity and good judgment as the characters in this book, but sometimes I have to wonder.

Daniel says

Two words come to mind as I read this, fast and glib. I have to say that I really enjoyed this book. It read like a tasty drink of mostly empty calories, but it did taste great. Has all the makings of a movie that will make the right person's career, just a question of who right now in Hollywood could play the roles of Cassandra (Leslie Bibb) and Senator Jepperson (Robert Downey, Jr.), because if you get the right sexual chemistry between them, you could really have something there (oh wait, they did that already).

Anyway, I inhaled this book because it was so fun to read and I was sorry to see it end. Realizing that this is not a great book, just a very entertaining one, it does however deal with a very real social issue. That it does so on a Jonathan Swift-esque "Let's all eat our children" kind of way does tend to diminish the problem, and of course Buckley tends to take the arguments against baby boomers to illogical extremes. Although some of the attitudes and arguments he poses against what he calls the "ungreatest generation" are finding a louder voice lately and probably rightfully so. I was at a work conference lately and someone stood and said that if he could "broom the room" of his baby boomers and hire nothing but "millenials" at one third the price, he'd get better performance from his crew. I think that Christopher Buckley would tend to agree, at least in the context of this novel.

So, as I read it, I kept thinking that this book was sort of an Anti-humanist Vonnegut rant (twisted, I know), a Jonathan Swift illogical extreme argument, a fast paced movie script complete with soundtrack by REM &

U2, with a dash of Firesign Theater's "Radio Now" for flavor.

But if the book does touch on something interesting it is the fact that bloggers and a new way to campaign are reaching out to an under-30 crowd and making a real impact in the way that we choose our leaders, something that we are seeing play out in the national debate right before our eyes. When we see candidates ignore the internet at their own peril, when we see the grassroots and the viral marketing that is going on in the campaigns for President, the kind of unprecedented reach that the world wide web allows for the various messages coming out of the political camps that was really unheard of before becomes revealed. That a candidate like Ron Paul can continue "money bombing" his way into the public consciousness by embracing this new technology, that fans of Barack Obama can put up you-tube videos promoting their candidate or opposing John McCain really shows some of the new directions that politics is heading towards. And the candidates who did not embrace the new ways are instead left behind handing out endorsements.

Anyway, the book is a great summer read and it will make you think about the future of our country, in between all the smart-allecky lines and clever comebacks. Enjoy!!!

Mike says

Let's start by saying this...Christopher Buckley is a fucking genius! His books make me laugh in my brain. It's different than laughing out loud at obvious funnies. It's not Will Ferrell funny. It's more George Carlin funny. It's just the way he distorts and exaggerates the real world to show us just how ridiculous the real world is.

In "Boomsday" Buckley creates a hot, blonde, former military, PR crusader with a predilection for Ayn Rand in Cassandra Devine. During the day she helps her boss create celebrity golf Pro-AM's in North Korea to improve their image and at night she sits at her computer hopped up on Red Bull and blogs about her crusade...to stop the baby boomer generation from forcing our (my) generation to pay for their retirements. You see since there are sooooo many of these "boomers" retiring it takes more of us working longer to pay into social security to accommodate them all. So with the help of her boss Terry Taylor (who is Nick Naylor's protégé from "Thank You for Smoking") and Senator Randolph Jepperson, whom she met in a mine field, she sets attempts to set a new agenda for social security. She proposes that the American government give tax breaks and incentives to the families of anyone over 65 that kills themselves and spares social security to actually have to pay for them. There are also those who oppose her...I mean besides the obvious Boomers, like the current foul-mouthed President who's running the country into the ground like his surname was Bush and the pro-life champion Reverend Gideon Payne who wants to create a monument on the DC Mall for the 43 million fetuses that have been aborted.

There is of course more to it than that but to find out what it is you have to read it. Just the main point alone was worth me having to read this. Be altruistic and kill yourself...that's a great message! I was seriously unhappy when I turned the last page because I didn't want it to end. If you have even the slightest sense of humor and the slightest interest in politics this is a book you shouldn't miss. I can't wait for his next book "Supreme Courtship" where the President of the US nominates a TV judge to the Supreme Court to get back at the Senate for shooting down his other nominees. All hail Buckley...that sick bastard.
