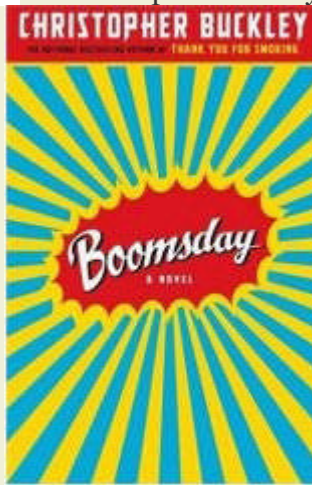


PRINT

BUCKLEY SPINS A HILARIOUS POLITICAL TALE

Review by Al Kaufman

Let's face it, it's not too hard to find humor in politics. Every day it gets easier and easier. Everyone has their favorite Clinton sexcapade or Bush incompetence joke. Everyone knows all politicians are morally bankrupt and cerebrally inept. They're all just too easy to pick on. So if you're going to do it, and do it well, you better be good. Christopher Buckley is great.



BOOMSDAY
Christopher Buckley
Twelve

In *BOOMSDAY*, his twelfth novel, Cassandra Devine, master blogger, starts a national debate by suggesting that baby boomers (whom she calls the “un-greatest generation”) kill themselves (which she refers to as “voluntary transitioning”) by age 60 in exchange for government incentives, so that her generation (“generation whatever”) won’t be stuck footing the bill.

Buckley then squares up the teams on either side and lets them go at it. The good guys (the pro-voluntary transitioning people) include: Cassandra; Terry Tucker, her boss at the PR firm, Tucker Strategic Communications; and liberal Massachusetts Senator Randolph Jepperson. The bad guys include: President Riley Peacham; his top aide, Bucky Trumble; Cassandra’s dad, Frank Cohane; and voice of the pro-life movement, Reverend Gideon Payne.

Here is where Buckley shines. The only reason the good guys are good is because they are slightly less hypocritical and morally vacuous than the bad guys, and I do mean slightly. Tucker Strategic Communications represents companies like mink ranchers and countries like North Korea. Senator Jepperson would sell his progressive soul for a shot at the presidency (or a hot piece of ass). Yet these are the people who seem to have their hearts in the right place. They’re better than a hypocritical reverend and a father who takes his daughter’s Yale University tuition money so he can keep his yacht and BMW.

Buckley grew up in politics. His father is William F. Buckley, founder of the conservative magazine National Review. Christopher was chief speechwriter for George H.W. Bush and founder of Forbes FYI Magazine. He understands Washington. He knows that the spin is the thing. The characters in BOOMSDAY spend so much time trying to make positive spin out of their indiscretions that the plot becomes incidental. And while Buckley seems to effortlessly and hilariously point out the absurdities of their methods, it is obvious that he respects their abilities to do what they do. The people in Buckley's novels are masters at spin. They make Karl Rove look like a (pardon the pun) bush leaguer.

In doing this, Buckley also points the finger at us. We don't care if voluntary transitioning becomes a law, we just want the gossip. Who is sleeping with whom? Who cut shady business deals with whom? We are a generation that would rather watch AMERICAN IDOL semi-finals than a Presidential debate. Buckley understands that and uses it brilliantly to his advantage.

Christopher Buckley is one of the most brilliant political satirists alive. Everyone from Communists to fascists are in his fan base. You don't need to be affiliated to a certain party to enjoy his books; you just need to have a sense of humor and be jaded when it comes to politics. And those are issues that reach across all party lines. Want proof? While Buckley is a staunch Conservative, the audio version of his book is read by the outspoken liberal actress and former Air America radio personality, Janeane Garafolo. It is a match that could only be made in Washington—or a Buckley novel.