

# GERONTICIDE

By Antaeus Belevre

**WHY WE LIKE IT:** *A beautifully controlled poignantly told dramatic monologue that delivers a scathing indictment to the way society treats its marginalized citizens. The indignities and humiliations that come with age and infirmity are explored through the eyes of a man who has hit bottom. The American Dream has become a nightmare and his only refuge is to withdraw into the memory of a kinder past. What is remarkable here is the way the author has created a three-dimensional character who is both victim and survivor. It's not without a touch of sentimentality but in this case we think it makes rather than breaks the story. If the coffee's bitter, add some sugar.*

## Geronticide

Geronticide. Noun. The killing or euthanasia of the elderly.

Damn, the park is crowded today, Larry. It looks like the only bench available is the one near the trash receptacle. I know, I know, the smell is terrible, but we'd better grab it before someone else does.

You keep your eyes open while we're here. The radio says there have been three muggings in the park this week, and us older folk are prime targets. Don't you worry though, I got us covered. I brought the bayonet I snuck home from Vietnam with me, and I ain't afraid to use it.

\* \* \*

Aaaah, it feels good to rest these old bones, doesn't it, pal?

Now, where did I put that little sample bag of popcorn the supermarket gave me? I know it's in this shopping bag somewhere. Hmm, maybe I left it—no, here it is. The darn thing was hiding under my bologna sandwich.

Come-on, come-on, you can do it, Hal. Just pinch each side and pull it apart. That's what the directions say. Yeah, right, easy for whoever wrote this. Probably some Millennial. An older person wouldn't let the company seal the package like that. Doesn't anyone think about us older folks anymore?

Of course not.

You don't have strong fingers when you're 78, well 79 today, and our grip ain't what it used to be, ya dumb package designer. Now I gotta use my teeth, well my dentures anyway.

...Darn it! Now the popcorn is all over the place. Why is it that you have to strain and strain, then all-of-a-sudden the bag pops open and rips halfway down? Some designer's joke, I'm sure.

Larry, don't you even think about gobblin' that popcorn up. The ground is too dirty for that. Let that pigeon eat it.

You won't let it won't go to waste, will you, my cooing little friend? You're a fat little bugger ain'tcha? I bet you don't have to live on bologna sandwiches like I do.

\* \* \*

Hey, look, Larry, someone left a perfectly good newspaper in the trash. I haven't read one of these in almost a year. Let's see what's goin' on in the world. It's already opened to the financial pages, so we might as well start here.

The headline says U.S. Gives Financial Aid to 96% of All Countries<sup>1</sup>.

According to government figures, the U.S. gave away \$19 billion in economic assistance to foreign countries each year. China gets \$28.3 million of that money.

The article goes on to say that the United Nations (UN) has 193 members, and the U.S. provided economic assistance to 184 of them or 96% of the countries in the world. State Department officials claim that some of the money is to help the poor.

That's a lot of BS Larry. China has the second-largest economy in the world. In fact, they are a significant buyer of U.S. debt. So, what do we do? We give China financial assistance, and they used our own money to buy our debt. In other words, we provide them with cash so we can borrow it back.

Just look at these numbers, will you?<sup>2</sup> Iraq gets \$5,281,179,380, Afghanistan gets \$5,060,306,051, Syria \$916,426,147, Pakistan \$777,504,870, and the list goes on. I thought we were at war with these people.

Look at this next article. It says the government has raised the poverty threshold from \$11,000 to a little over \$12,000 for an individual adult. The article goes on to say that there are now 36,460,000 people in the United States, who live below the poverty level. That would be us, old friend.

Can you imagine? The government gives away 19 Billion dollars to other countries when there are over 36,000,000 of its own people who are living in poverty.

\* \* \*

Ya know Larry, a person works their whole life, and what do they do when you reach 65? They send you out to die, that's what they do. It doesn't matter if you want to keep on working.

"Got to make room for the younger folks," they say.

"You'll live high on the hog collecting Social Security, so go for it, they tell you. Uncle Sam takes good care of his veterans and older Americans."

Yup, that's what they said, and it's all bullshit lies.

Why don't ya call it what it is, you bunch of bureaucratic bungholes? Geronticide, that's what it is. The general abandonment of the elderly to die early, commit suicide, or be killed.

It doesn't matter to the government that you scrimped and saved every penny you could during your working life. Damn cost of livin' just eats it all up. Social Security? What a joke that is. Even the name is a lie. There ain't no security in it at all. According to the people in charge, it's gonna run out of money soon.

My generation worked hard and put a lot of money into the Social Security pot. It's not our fault that the Congress and the Senate used it as a slush fund to pay hush money to their mistress or fund their favorite bridge to nowhere. Washington, you put all that money back that you "borrowed," and Social Security will be just fine.

What'd say, Larry? Why don't we go on welfare? We can't collect welfare. If you have an

income of over \$12,000, you're not eligible for welfare. The government says my shitty Social Security check is income. Only illegal aliens can get welfare, food stamps, and free medical coverage. Senior citizens get none of that.

You good-for-nothing politicians better get it right. Quit calling Social Security a handout and welfare an entitlement. We put our hard-earned money into social security because you said it was like a savings account, and we'd get it back when we retire. That's an entitlement, not a handout.

I know a lot of people who are third and fourth generation on welfare and never worked a day in their life. Why don't ya call welfare what it is, a handout to get a vote? An' it's a handout you can't get if your collecting Social Security and have a few pennies in the bank. . .

Hey, bird, d' ya want smore popcorn?

\* \* \*

Now, where was I? Oh, yeah, they make collecting Social Security sound good all right, don't they, Larry? The government does its figgerin and tells you you'll receive \$1,600 a month on Social Security. They wave that in your face an' get you to sign up. Then, while you're busy watching the hand waving the check, the other hand picks ya pocket.

Uncle Sam tells you Medicare is mandatory when you reach 65, then they deduct a Medicare premium and a supplemental hospital insurance fee. Wham, \$160 is gone. The IRS wants its share, and they deduct taxes at a 15% rate. Bam, another \$240 plus gone. Medicare Prescription drug coverage part "D" means another \$200 gets taken away. Thank you, mam.

My \$1,600 Social Security check is reduced to \$1,000 a month, and there wasn't even any foreplay.

Mr. Congressman, Mr. Senator, you try paying your rent, utilities, doctor copays, prescription copays and put food on the table with a budget of \$1,000 a month. Why my damn rent for the shithole Section 8 apartment is more than that. And I'm not even counting the cost of necessities like transportation, food, toilet paper, and such.

Like I said, it's Geronticide. Only you government types are so sneaky about it, no one knows you're doing it. . .

\* \* \*

Sorry, there's no more popcorn left bird. Don't you be lookin' at this bologna sandwich, or I'll ring ya scrawny pigeon neck.

Hey, Larry, you want a taste of this bologna sandwich?

There you go being an ass again. Just say "no" if you don't want a bite. Don't sniff it and lay back down on the bench. That's all you do lately is sleep, a person would think you had a job or something.

I know, pal, I'm not too keen on chowing down a green bologna sandwich either, but a mans gotta eat, even if he gets a stomachache later. Some birthday this is, Larry. Nobody gives a shit that I'm 80 today. Why, if my wife Rosie were still around, she'd have made me her world-famous, lip-smackin' franks an' beans casserole.

\* \* \*

Get out a here, bird! Damn pigeons eat an' shit, that's all they do. Don't serve any useful purpose at all, except maybe ta keep a body company.

Where in the hell was I anyway?

...Oh, I remember now. I gotta share an apartment with two other people just to keep a roof over my head. The rent is \$1,900 a month for a place that ain't worth half that. Billy and I pool our money for the rent, utilities, and food.

Rosie never worked, so she doesn't collect Social Security and can't contribute. She takes care of Billy, does the laundry, and what cooking there is instead. It was Rosie that made my bologna sandwich. She even cut the moldy crust off the bread for me.

Poor Billy, we both fought in The Nam, only he got sick from agent orange, and I didn't. The VA says he ain't ill from AO, so they won't give him benefits. His social security disability check gets cut down to \$500 a month after he pays for all his medication. Who can survive on \$500 a month? No one can.

Sometimes we have to wait three or four years for a cost of living adjustment (COLA), and when we get it, it's always less than what we need to survive.

The cost of living goes up 1.3%, and the government gave us seniors a .03% increase. That's a 1% loss. That same year the government raised the Medicare premium by 2%. That year our income went down by 3%.

Another year the government gave us a whopping 2.8% increase in Social Security. We celebrated by eating real hamburgers, not the fake kind from Mikey D's. Then we found out that the cost of living had gone up 3.4%, and the Medicare premium went up 2.9%. That made our income less than it was before the COLA payment.

This year Uncle Sam gave us a COLA raise of 1.6%, and you guessed it, they raised the Medicare Part B premium 7%, and our income was cut back again.<sup>3</sup>

Everyone else that's working or on welfare gets a COLA increase without deductions. Us seniors get a boost, and you raise the cost of Medicare to take it all away and then some. Tell me that's not Geronticide.

Those bastards in Washington are gonna burn in hell. They send billions of dollars overseas and give nothing to the people who built this country. They love to say, "America first," and it's all a bunch of bullshit!

\* \* \*

Huh? Who's that? Move away or I'll...

Oh, it's you, Rosie. I didn't recognize you with that colorful hat on your head. Did you know my wife used to wear hats like that all the time?

Okay, okay, I'll put the bayonet away. Sorry, I didn't even realize I had it in my hand. It's the PTSD, you know. Something scares me, and I just react, I can't help myself.

Whaddya mean you been lookin' for me all day? I've been right here sittin' on this bench with Larry, all along.

Oh, this isn't the park I usually come to. Well, can you imagine that? I must've stepped off the bus at the wrong stop.

It's time for dinner, ya say. I ain't too hungry right now, maybe I should just stay here.

What'd say? We're havin' franks and beans for my birthday supper tonight.

You know, Rosie, franks, and beans are my favorite. My wife always made them for me on my birthday every year.

Yeah, sure, screw the bologna sandwich, I'll come home and have that meal any day.

Hey, wait a minute, shouldn't you be home taking care of Billy?

Huh? What's that you say? My brother Billy and his dog, Larry, died three years ago? That can't be, I just talked to Billy this morning, and Larry is layin' right here... Hey, where did that old dog get off too?

Why are you crying, Rosie? Please don't cry, you know I don't know what to do when you cry.

Sure, that's a good idea, let's go home now.

Err, Rosie, will you hold onto my arm? I can't seem to remember the way home.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/othercomments/2014/10/15/u-s-gives-financial-aid-to-96-of-all-countries/#5058d871ccb9>

<sup>2</sup> <https://howmuch.net/articles/usa-foreign-aid-by-country>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gomedigap.com/medicare-answers/medicare-supplement-plans/medicare-2020-changes/>

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** *Like a lot of writers, my writing style is influenced by what is happening and what has happened in my life. We all have unique, individual experiences that affect our personality and influence our writing.*

*I wrote Geronticide because a friend told me he was having a hard time making ends meet on his Social Security income. He said the amount he received went down every year, instead of up.*

*Long story short, I did some research and found that what he said was true. Every once in a great while, Uncle Sam gives Social Security recipients a Cost Of Living Adjustment (COLA). The COLA does not reflect the rising cost of drugs or healthcare, so it is well below the actual cost of living. For example, in 2016 alone, the healthcare inflation rate was 3.13%-yet the Social Security COLA was 0%*

*This year my friend received a 1.6% increase in his Social Security (about \$25.00 per month). Meanwhile, his cost for Medicare went up 7%, and his copay prescription costs went up to \$30.*

*I was outraged and wrote Geronticide. The story may be fiction, but the facts are real. My intention was to bring this purposeful act of deprivation by the government to light.*

*Sometimes our outrage also influences our writing.*

**BIO:** *Antaeus started working in his uncle's New Jersey bar, at the age of seven, cleaning toilets. He wrote his first poem on a piece of toilet paper. Antaeus is the author of "The Prepared Citizen," a three-book series on how to react to and avoid dangerous situations and active shooter attacks. In addition to nonfiction, Antaeus has also published sci-fi, action/adventure, and fantasy novels.*

*Antaeus lives now in Florida and uses real paper to write on.*

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