

## HOUR OF LEAD: AN ECO TERROR RIFF ON GLOBAL WARMING

by Christina Ham

ZEREMIAH	male, early-fifties (African-American, grizzled dreads, rode hard and put away)
BRADY	male, early-fifties (White, gaunt, bull in a chotchsky shop)
AISLING/'ASH'	female, jailbait (wiry, feral, kick-ass member of Generation Z)
JUDAS	male, any age (corpse)

### TIME:

It'll grab you by your throat and drag you kicking and screaming soon enough.

### PLACE:

A fucked up truck stop far north nestled close to the edge of a two-lane black top.

### AUTHOR'S NOTES:

The use of ellipses set within brackets represents something that's longer than a pause or a beat. The best way to describe it is as a moment of silence. Several of these together mean TAKE YOUR TIME. These instances should be observed and embraced.

This play is performed with no intermission.

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*“...they left this melancholy spot, where so many of their friends and relatives had perished; and with heavy hearts and dark forbodings of the future, pursued their pathless course through the newly-fallen snow...”*

- Excerpt from William H. Eddy’s journal of the Donner Snowshoe Party at the “Camp of the Death”

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### ***in the beginning.***

*A prologue (of sorts). A message crawls through the dark like vines choking prey. It is spoken by an adult female underscored by muzak. It should play in a loop becoming more and more distorted.*

Living in cold weather conditions can be life threatening. The information provided here is designed for educational use only and is not a substitute for specific training or experience. The author assumes no liability for any individual's use of or reliance upon any material contained or referenced herein. When living in cold weather conditions it is your responsibility to learn the latest information:

### ***on the outside.***

*Here lies the truck stop. Morbidly obese in this gaunt existence. A katabatic wind blows hard and heavy like a heaving cough unleashing its arctic hell upon this terrain. Banks of snow barricade this forgotten receptacle of trucks and their parts and the macabre that crouches in its corners waiting on its next victim.*

*ZEREMIAH heavily shielded from the elements uses an ice ax to finish wearing away at the huge bank of snow that has gathered at the door. Was a time generations of men in his family used to be bringers of the Word, but now...hmp. ZEREMIAH takes his shoulder and gives the door one gigantic nudge. It opens painfully. He, along with some of the snow, pour through the door like pure cane sugar.*

### ***in here.***

*ZEREMIAH shuts off his flashlight. Inside the truck stop—darkness and the wind that came in with him like a blast of angels. He fights the wind to shut the door as it slams. ZEREMIAH's footsteps quiver their way through the darkness.*

*[...][...][...][...][...]*

*A gunshot from o.s.*

ZEREMIAH

b?!

*[...][...][...][...]*

wasnt expecting	BRADY (o.s.)
.....	ZEREMIAH
snuck OUT	BRADY (o.s.)
left note	ZEREMIAH
back 'n week—no later	BRADY (o.s.)
150 below—see how quick you come back from dead	ZEREMIAH
challenge?	BRADY (o.s.)
up to it	ZEREMIAH
nine days. said seven	BRADY (o.s.)
trouble crossing river	ZEREMIAH
shoulda done / different	BRADY (o.s.)
differents five-day hike no supplies last me	ZEREMIAH
answer for EVERYTHING	BRADY (o.s.)
tracks near river—had to double back	ZEREMIAH
promised week—period	BRADY (o.s.)
best i / could	ZEREMIAH

[...]

all thats left—your word  
BRADY (o.s.)

tracks near river—had to double back  
ZEREMIAH

shoulda never said week  
BRADY (o.s.)

almost starved /  
ZEREMIAH

*Still tripping.*

'bout to cut flag / lines  
BRADY (o.s.)

made stew outta my wind pants / ate'em  
ZEREMIAH

sat here stewed for YOU  
BRADY (o.s.)

clipped my shoulder  
ZEREMIAH

shoot to kill  
BRADY (o.s.)

cold shells aint kill  
ZEREMIAH

shiiiiiiiiiiiiit  
BRADY (o.s.)

dropped your / ass  
ZEREMIAH  
*(holds up ice ax)*

couldnt / drop  
BRADY (o.s.)

sure?  
ZEREMIAH

reduced control no / speed  
BRADY (o.s.)

up to sixteen feet—never missed

ZEREMIAH

on good day

BRADY (o.s.)

wasting bullets

ZEREMIAH

*ZEREMIAH cracks a glow stick and rolls it on the floor to light the area. He cracks another one and holds it in his hand. He struggles to climb to his feet. He holds the ice ax in his other hand ready to take on any remaining assailants. His arm bobs and weaves from the weight in both hands. There is a sled that naps near his feet. He gets a better look at the inside of the truck stop. Mangled, twisted like a rope, face it—the place is jacked up. Tables are toppled and chairs thrown about the place. Plates, glasses, sugar dispensers, and silverware (to name a few) litter the poorly shellacked floor. The leather booths have been deliberately sliced open and their stuffing pulled out as if a pillow fight has occurred. Some of the stools at the counter have been ripped from their foundation and...what's that? The 'specials' board that hangs above the counter now dangles from its perch for dear life. Dried blood has replaced the star spangled decorations that used to hang here. The one decoration that remains nailed into the wall is a tattered American flag. A large item is mounted above the fray and is draped in a 13 foot cover. Besides these is a taxidermed deer's head that hangs upside down. The ceiling is noticeably caved in as if God's mighty right hand is resting on it. And, get this... A man is frozen to one of the chairs with his throat cut. His mouth is wide open like a ventriloquist's dummy. Frozen blood hangs like stalagmites from the body.*

*[...][...][...][...][...]*

happened?

ZEREMIAH (cont.)

bogeymen

BRADY

two days ago?

ZEREMIAH

more-less

BRADY

ZEREMIAH

fresh tracks get me here—must belong to bogeymen

*ZEREMIAH tentatively moves to check out the rest of the truck stop. A gun is cocked o.s. ZEREMIAH stops.*

BRADY (o.s.)

far enough frosty

*ZEREMIAH points light toward o.s. area.*

ZEREMIAH

aisle five's fucked

BRADY (o.s.)

tampon aisle? time of month for you already?

ZEREMIAH

gas?

BRADY (o.s.)

'bout it?

ZEREMIAH

smell it

BRADY (o.s.)

aint

ZEREMIAH

sure?

BRADY (o.s.)

my life on it

[...]

ZEREMIAH

ice on ceiling

BRADY (o.s.)

so?

ZEREMIAH

ain't there before

BRADY (o.s.)

busy looking over shoulder to look up. 'bout to leave

*ZEREMIAH pushes the hood of his jacket off of his head to reveal a ski cap, neck gaiter, balaclava, and goggles. He takes all of this stuff off. His hair is a matted mass of dreads and a large beard covers his face that is semi-impacted with icicles. BRADY coughs heavily. ZEREMIAH cautiously moves again, but the broken plates and glass crunch beneath his feet. He stops.*

ices starting to break	ZEREMIAH
you geologist?	BRADY (o.s.)
saw start of a lake on way here	ZEREMIAH
seen before—only to freeze again	BRADY (o.s.)
warm fronts here	ZEREMIAH
last ice age last 25,000 years	BRADY (o.s.)
lake keep melting get off this ark sooner more 'n later	ZEREMIAH
stay put—stay alive	BRADY (o.s.)
cabin fever?	ZEREMIAH
days it?	BRADY (o.s.)
left on...monday	ZEREMIAH
mondays melt down ice— melt no ice day you left	BRADY (o.s.)
our rule: say its monday—it is	ZEREMIAH

[...]

lemme see you  
ZEREMIAH (cont.)

OFF light—scares us roaches  
BRADY (o.s.)

why?  
(*hesitant*)  
ZEREMIAH

need to enter in darkness—way i did my mamas womb  
BRADY (o.s.)

*ZEREMIAH turns out the light.*

'bout company?  
ZEREMIAH

dont mind dinner—he just defrosting  
BRADY (o.s.)

*BRADY enters. He turns on a fluorescent light. He carries a high-tech rifle and has infrared goggles pulled onto his head. He has long gray hair and a beard to match. He wears many layers of clothing including a big parka. Both men wince as their eyes adjust to the macabre—blood on the floor and against the walls. BRADY walks towards ZEREMIAH who backs away.*

four guns?  
(*rubbing eyes*)  
ZEREMIAH

think 'fore you answer  
(*holds up two fingers*)  
BRADY

[...]

five?  
ZEREMIAH

eyes baked—again  
BRADY

you justa dog doc  
ZEREMIAH

know snow blind  
BRADY

good goggles hard to find  
ZEREMIAH

ice on 'em—fine few hours  
BRADY

*BRADY limps to a corner of the floor, takes out his knife and chips a chunk of ice. He wraps it in the bandana from around his head and gives it to ZEREMIAH who gladly takes it and uses it occasionally.*

many guns really got?  
ZEREMIAH

one. last bullets mine  
BRADY

*BRADY limps as he checks the lock on the door.  
ZEREMIAH notices.*

dont look hot  
ZEREMIAH

speak for you  
BRADY

thought we wait  
ZEREMIAH  
(*points to corpse*)

nine days wait  
BRADY

*BRADY takes out his bowie knife and uses it to slice off a piece of the CORPSE's ear. He gnaws on it. ZEREMIAH takes in the severity of their situation.*

hit hard  
ZEREMIAH

been worse  
BRADY

much ice have to melt to clean  
ZEREMIAH

fuck it  
BRADY

aint sanitary  
ZEREMIAH

from man gonna eat his shit two weeks ago  
BRADY

lay off  
ZEREMIAH

bring me?  
BRADY

*ZEREMIAH smiles and reaches inside his jacket pocket and ceremoniously pulls out a beautiful purple flower. He hands it to BRADY who examines it suspiciously.*

flower  
ZEREMIAH

.....  
BRADY

.....  
(shrugs)  
ZEREMIAH

dead  
(bites it)  
BRADY

plastic  
ZEREMIAH

why bring?  
BRADY

proof of former life  
ZEREMIAH

*BRADY flings the flower across the room. ZEREMIAH rushes BRADY and puts his finger in BRADY's chest. They are face to face.*

got from little girl  
ZEREMIAH (cont.)

*BRADY cocks his rifle in one hand. ZEREMIAH readies his ax.*

BRADY

brotha—your breath stinks

*ZEREMIAH backs off. He goes to retrieve the flower.*

ZEREMIAH

flower from beatrice (what i imagine her name). face frozen to ground. most cold vics up 'n die like baby; this ten-year angel die face away. recall to heaven stripped her warmth. clawed icy wind 'til it held her down for good. one by one peeled each tiny finger from stem 'til she had nothing left to cling. final one (her pinky) broke off. flower gift from her to me to carry on

*Wait a fucking second.*

BRADY

plastic flower tole you this?

[...]

ZEREMIAH

girl

BRADY

dead one?

[...][...][...]

BRADY (cont.)

old are you?

ZEREMIAH

trick?

BRADY

you cant answer

[...]

ZEREMIAH

fifty-two

[...]

BRADY

days date?

ZEREMIAH

did this

AGAIN

BRADY

nine days later than before

ZEREMIAH

close (thinks)

BRADY

[...]

president?

BRADY (cont.)

he look like me. lemme / sit

ZEREMIAH

make me deck you

BRADY

*They stand off. ZEREMIAH eyes BRADY's rifle. BRADY eyes ZEREMIAH's ax.*

*They stand off. ZEREMIAH eyes BRADY's rifle. BRADY eyes ZEREMIAH's ax.*

fucking humiliate me?

ZEREMIAH

gotta know

BRADY

we dead men talking

ZEREMIAH

*BRADY catches ZEREMIAH's jaw with a punch. ZEREMIAH straightens himself.*

hit better than you used to

ZEREMIAH

one-two—like rocky taught me

BRADY

*ZEREMIAH gingerly tries to walk a straight line, one foot in front of the other, with as much dignity as he can muster. However, his movements are slow and labored.*

satisfied?

ZEREMIAH

ass down  
BRADY

*BRADY turns a chair over for ZEREMIAH to sit on.*

aint / bad  
ZEREMIAH

really?  
BRADY

need / food  
ZEREMIAH

sound off from one-hundred by sevens—go  
BRADY

[...]

ninety-three...eighty-seven  
ZEREMIAH

[...]

dont worry—got all day  
BRADY

*Thinking.*

gimme something / else  
ZEREMIAH

not going out there again  
BRADY

*BRADY slams his rifle onto the counter. ZEREMIAH sits the table upright. He rests his ax-hand on it.*

say who?  
ZEREMIAH

your mangled brains  
BRADY

im all / right  
ZEREMIAH

not dead ‘til you warm ‘n dead  
BRADY

dont tell / me ZEREMIAH

i cut off two of your toes BRADY

rubbing my nose in it? ZEREMIAH

nub frostbites left you with BRADY

my / body ZEREMIAH

i take care of. aint playing should it stay or go with your feet again BRADY

take care of self ZEREMIAH

lips blue BRADY

asthma aint bad as its been ZEREMIAH

feet? BRADY

can stand ZEREMIAH

prick—lemme see BRADY

*ZEREMIAH, resigned, struggles to untie his heavy boots.  
BRADY finishes untying them for ZEREMIAH. BRADY  
removes the boots and feels ZEREMIAH's socks.*

damp ZEREMIAH

dont take lot to get trench foot BRADY

*BRADY gingerly pulls the socks off of ZEREMIAH's feet.  
He puts his feet into his lap and begins to massage them.*

BRADY (cont.)  
head south again these old dogs aint make it

ZEREMIAH  
gemme a new pair

BRADY  
see what size come through door

*BRADY notices something on ZEREMIAH's pants.  
ZEREMIAH tries to squirm in his chair to keep BRADY from noticing.*

ZEREMIAH  
what?

BRADY  
know what piss smell like— 'specially yours

*BRADY walks behind the counter and gets a pair of dry  
pants for ZEREMIAH to put on. He also retrieves a clean pair of thermals.*

ZEREMIAH  
dress myself

*ZEREMIAH turns away from BRADY in his chair.*

BRADY  
shy?

*BRADY puts the clothes on the table. ZEREMIAH stands to  
change, but almost falls over. BRADY grabs him and sits  
him down. ZEREMIAH looks defeated.*

ZEREMIAH  
little

*ZEREMIAH touches BRADY's cheek. BRADY smacks his  
hand away.*

BRADY  
there like slasher film— ax down

[...]

ZEREMIAH  
fingers froze to it

BRADY  
happen?

ZEREMIAH  
rappelling slice glove. took off see damage—cause more

BRADY  
(sad sack of shit)

*BRADY walks over and examines his ax-hand carefully. Suddenly, BRADY catches ZEREMIAH off guard and rips the ax from his hand. ZEREMIAH crumples to the ground like paper and doubles over in pain. Pieces of flesh from his hand remain gripped to the ax handle BRADY holds the ax up.*

ZEREMIAH  
cocksucker motherfucker

BRADY  
stop taking my name in vain

ZEREMIAH  
warned me

BRADY  
woulda bitched up

ZEREMIAH  
lemme be a bitch—fucker

*BRADY wags the flesh riddled ax handle at ZEREMIAH.*

BRADY  
victuals later

ZEREMIAH  
like hell

BRADY  
like 15-year-girl on our first date (legs crossed mosta night) when both know nights end im gonna eat you—inside 'n out

ZEREMIAH  
filthy motherfucker...

*ZEREMIAH rushes toward BRADY to get the handle, but BRADY shoves the pieces of flesh into his mouth before ZEREMIAH can get to him. BRADY smiles a bloody smile.*

BRADY

*(licks his fingers)*

salty—like i thought you taste

ZEREMIAH

just crossed line with me

BRADY

filangies dripping blood. wrap—‘less you want me to take sip of you too

*ZEREMIAH looks at his hand and holds it defensively. He licks his wound partaking of the blood that is coming from it. BRADY puts the ax down and gets some electrical tape. ZEREMIAH sits while BRADY tries to restore his hand and wounded shoulder with the tape.*

ZEREMIAH

*(looks at hand)*

gonna lose it?

BRADY

sure it dont come that

*BRADY stands and goes behind the counter to get a huge blanket. BRADY gives ZEREMIAH the blanket that he puts around his shoulders.*

ZEREMIAH

*(coughs)*

drink

BRADY

waiting over a week now and you blow through here like a dead bitch wife

ZEREMIAH

*(struggles to stand)*

i’ll get

BRADY

make me laugh

*ZEREMIAH touches the slowly defrosting corpse.*

ZEREMIAH

where twinkie when you need one?

*BRADY opens a plastic bottle filled with a dark colored liquid substance. He slams it in front of ZEREMIAH. ZEREMIAH reaches for it, but misses badly. Clearly, he*

*has trouble seeing it. BRADY notices. He places the bottle in ZEREMIAH's hand. ZEREMIAH drinks from it then coughs.*

got from fresh kill	BRADY	
get anything else?	ZEREMIAH	
		[...]
nope	BRADY	
that dont happen often	ZEREMIAH <i>(drinks some more)</i>	
anomalies funny thing	BRADY	
coulda used new pair gloves, coat, wind pants—goggles	ZEREMIAH	
tough luck	BRADY	
just one come?	ZEREMIAH	
wasnt counting	BRADY	
		<i>ZEREMIAH notices something on BRADY's wrist. He grabs it, but BRADY pulls his wrist away.</i>
fuck happen?	ZEREMIAH	
picture aint worth 1,000 words?	BRADY <i>(looks around truck stop)</i>	
like blood of two men on walls	ZEREMIAH	
four	BRADY	

*Shit.*

militia?	ZEREMIAH
wasnt	BRADY
sure?	ZEREMIAH
wasnt branded	BRADY
get the key?	ZEREMIAH
swallowed	BRADY
meat left?	ZEREMIAH
nine days—long time	BRADY
four guys?	ZEREMIAH
bad shape—throw'em out	BRADY
hell you did	ZEREMIAH
where meat, fucker?	<i>(grabs BRADY)</i>
tole	BRADY
bullshit	ZEREMIAH
burned'em	BRADY
lie	ZEREMIAH

true	BRADY	
	ZEREMIAH	
	<i>(releases BRADY)</i>	
four guys—eaten more ‘n month		
	BRADY	
care ‘bouts stuffing your fat ass		
	ZEREMIAH	
lost mind for good?		
	BRADY	
evil—tell the difference		
	ZEREMIAH	
cant leave you alone no more		
	BRADY	
we come here to die—deliberately		
	ZEREMIAH	
that why choke marks?		
	BRADY	
lil ring round collar		
	ZEREMIAH	
what happen?		
	BRADY	
usual		
		<i>Not again.</i>
	ZEREMIAH	
just started / blasting		
	BRADY	
woulda done same		
	ZEREMIAH	
maybe they had information—resources. ‘fore them no ones been through / here		
	BRADY	
months		

all more / reason	ZEREMIAH	
best i could under shitty conditions	BRADY	
dont get sore	ZEREMIAH	
aint sore—one got frostbite	BRADY	
how they break in?	ZEREMIAH	
		[...]
brady?	ZEREMIAH (cont.)	
		[...][...]
days it?	BRADY	
		[...]
	ZEREMIAH	
decide monday. need you to focus a sec. how they get in?		

**- END OF EXCERPT -**

**To finish reading the play contact the playwright:  
emailme@christinaham.com**