

CRUSADE

By

Bruce Bonafede

CRUSADE

© 2024 by Bruce Bonafede

CAUTION: Professionals and Amateurs are hereby warned that performance of **CRUSADE** is subject to payment of a royalty. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of The United States of America, and of all countries covered by the International Copyright Union (including the Dominion of Canada and the rest of the British Commonwealth) and of all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention, the Berne Convention, and of all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations. All rights, including without limitation professional/amateur stage rights, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all other forms of mechanical, electronic and digital reproduction, transmission and distribution, such as CD, DVD, the Internet, private and file-sharing networks, information storage and retrieval systems, photocopying, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. Particular emphasis is placed upon the matter of readings, permission of which must be obtained from the Author in writing.

The English language stock and amateur stage performance rights in the United States, its territories, possessions and Canada for **CRUSADE** are controlled exclusively by Next Stage Press. No professional or nonprofessional performance of the Play may be given without obtaining in advance written permission and paying the requisite fee. Inquiries concerning production rights should be addressed to genekato@nextstagepress.com

SPECIAL NOTE

Anyone receiving permission to produce **CRUSADE** is required to give credit to the Author as sole and exclusive Author of the Play on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. The name of the Author must appear on a separate line, in which no other name appears, immediately beneath the title and in size of type equal to 50% of the size of the largest, most prominent letter used for the title of the Play. No person, firm, or entity may receive credit larger or more prominent than that accorded the Author.

CRUSADE

CAST of CHARACTERS

4 M, 2 F, 1 M(voice only)

BRITT. Corporal Brittany Trent. Female, 20s, any race.
JOSH. Specialist Joshua Stein. Male, early 20s, white, Jewish.
GALEN. Lee Galen, PhD. Female, 70s, any race.
MITCH. Lieutenant Mitchell Abrams. Male, early 30s, white.
HECTOR. Private Hector Guzman. Male, 30s, Hispanic.
KERSHAW. Private Peter Kershaw. Male, early 20s, any race.
HELICOPTER
PILOT. (Voice only). Adult male.

PLACE: A cabin in the Rocky Mountains.
TIME: The near future. The play takes place during the
Christian conquest of the Western United States.

CRUSADE

CRUSADE was originally produced at Baltimore Theatre Project by Rapid Lemon Productions as part of the Baltimore Playwrights Festival in August 2019. The producer was Max Garner. The production was directed by Timoth David Copney with the following cast.

Britt	Lola Reign
Josh	Eric Boelsche
Galen	Emma Hawthorn
Mitch	Flynn Harne
Hector	Noah Silas
Kershaw	Stephen Kime
Helicopter Pilot (voice only)	Max Garner

The author wishes to acknowledge and thank the following for their participation in the development of CRUSADE: Richard Marlow, Victoria Prescott, Sean Timothy Brown, Aiden Bosworth, Constance Cilva, Miguel Arballo, and Jonathan Hatsios.

CRUSADE

CRUSADE

SETTING: A cabin in the Rocky Mountains. We see the main room of the cabin and a hint of the surrounding forest. In the center of the upstage wall is a door between two large windows which leads out onto a covered porch and the woods beyond. In the right wall a stone fireplace and another window. Downstage of these an upholstered chair, a small table, a reading lamp plugged into the wall. Upstage left a small kitchen area. A door to the bedroom in the left wall. Downstage center a heavy wooden table with four wooden chairs. The décor is rustic, masculine, but there is one feminine touch: a colorful flower pot on the table. But no flowers.

AT RISE: As the house lights go to black, the sound of an attack helicopter approaching. It grows progressively louder until directly overhead. It holds while the theatre is in complete darkness. The sound is tremendous.

After several seconds, the sound begins to lessen as the stage lights rise. The chopper is moving off. Before the sound has completely faded, the upstage door bursts open and Corporal Trent—BRITT—charges into the room. She carries a sniper rifle.

Britt does a fast sweep of the empty room, then immediately moves toward the bedroom door. Specialist Stein—JOSH—enters quickly behind her, also sweeping the room with his assault rifle. Josh carries the squad's field radio on his back. As Britt moves to the open bedroom door GALEN emerges through it, carrying a double-barreled shotgun. Britt expertly knocks her down and she grunts and falls, the shotgun clattering across the floor.

CRUSADE

Lieutenant Abrams—MITCH—appears at the open door with his assault rifle at the ready.

MITCH. Clear?

JOSH. Yes sir.

BRITT. Hold on. *(She exits into the bedroom. Josh is covering Galen, who groans and slowly rises to her knees. Britt returns.)* Clear.

MITCH. *(Calls outside.)* Hec! *(He moves into the room. Private Hector Guzman—HECTOR—enters. He too carries an assault rifle. Josh and Britt are both covering Galen.)* Button it up. *(Hector closes the door, moves around the room, closing the curtains over the windows.)* Who's this?

JOSH. Don't know.

BRITT. Had a gun. *(Galen starts to rise.)* Stay on your knees! Hands behind your head!

GALEN. *(Complying.)* Who are you? What do you want?

MITCH. Right. *(To Hector.)* Hec, on watch. *(Hector takes up position at one of the windows, peering out through the curtains. During the following he moves to the other windows doing the same thing.)*

GALEN. Who are you?

MITCH. *(Moves to Galen, trains his rifle on her.)* You a Jeesie?

GALEN. What?

BRITT. A Jeesie.

MITCH. You signal that chopper?

BRITT. Had to be her.

GALEN. What?

BRITT. Nobody else around.

MITCH. That chopper. Did you tell it we were here?

GALEN. I have no idea what you're talking about. I've never seen a helicopter here before.

BRITT. Yeah, right.

MITCH. Not likely that thing's out here on its own.

CRUSADE

BRITT. You think something's coming?

MITCH. Hope not.

BRITT. Can I do her?

GALEN. Who are you? What *is* this?

MITCH. I'll ask one last time. You a Jeesie?

GALEN. I don't even know what that means.

MITCH. Jeesie. Jesus. A Christian.

GALEN. A Christian? No!

BRITT. She has to be.

MITCH. What are you doing here?

GALEN. I'm not a. I live here, what does it look like?

BRITT. In the middle of nowhere?

MITCH. All the time?

GALEN. Yes. Yes all the time. I live here.

BRITT. She's got to be one.

GALEN. I'm not. You're crazy.

BRITT. (*Explodes.*) Damn right I'm crazy, motherfucker!

MITCH. Britt.

BRITT. Go tell your Jeesie friends I'm coming for them!

MITCH. Britt, stand down.

GALEN. I'm not a Christian. We came here to get away from the Christians.

MITCH. We? Who's we? Who else is here?

BRITT. Nobody. Not inside.

GALEN. I meant my wife.

MITCH. Where's she?

GALEN. She's not. She died.

MITCH. Hec? Anything?

HECTOR. Not a thing.

GALEN. I asked who you people are. What gives you the right—

CRUSADE

BRITT. *(Her rifle.)* This gives us the right.

MITCH. Britt. *(To Galen.)* We're U.S. Army. Long-range recon patrol. We're on a sweep of this area. Who are *you*?

GALEN. Lee Galen. *Doctor* Lee Galen. And I'd like you to please get out of my house.

MITCH. *(To Josh, who has been covering Galen.)* What do you think? Should we report that chopper to Base?

JOSH. Sir, we can't. If we send a signal with that thing in the area they could pick it up and—

MITCH. I know—

JOSH. —we're done.

MITCH. Shit. Hec, still nothing?

HECTOR. Not so far.

MITCH. Keep those windows covered.

GALEN. Look, I don't know what you want—

MITCH. We're here to do our mission and get the hell home. I don't want any trouble from you.

GALEN. I'm no trouble. I won't make any trouble.

BRITT. You had a gun.

GALEN. Of course I had a gun. I live in the woods. You come busting into my home. I just want to be left alone.

MITCH. Right. Up.

GALEN. I can't stand up with my hands like this. *(Mitch pulls Galen to her feet, drags her to the table.)*

MITCH. Sit. Hands flat on the table. Stay in that chair. You get up, move in any way, you're dead. *(Galen complies. Mitch picks up her shotgun, extracts two shells and pockets them.)* Drop the radio and keep her covered.

CRUSADE

JOSH. Yes sir. *(He unslings the radio and lays it carefully on the table, takes up his rifle again, covering Galen. Mitch places the unloaded shotgun and his own rifle on the table.)*

MITCH. Britt, take a break.

BRITT. We should tie her up.

MITCH. She's like seventy.

GALEN. Seventy-three.

MITCH. At ease. *(Britt drops her pack, sits on the floor.)*

HECTOR. Mitch? I can see across the whole valley from here. That chopper's all over the place. Back and forth. Circling.

MITCH. Circling what?

HECTOR. Can't tell. I can only see across to the other side. Not down to the bottom.

MITCH. *(To Galen.)* What's down there?

GALEN. The river.

MITCH. Salmon Run?

GALEN. Yes, Salmon Run. And the state highway alongside it.

MITCH. Three-forty-eight?

GALEN. Route three-forty-eight, yes.

MITCH. So something's moving on that road. Or could be soon.

BRITT. Didn't hear anything, vehicles.

MITCH. I know. *(To Galen.)* You own this place?

GALEN. For twenty years. And I've lived here for three.

MITCH. *(To Hector.)* Anything else? Planes? Drones?

HECTOR. Just the chopper.

MITCH. Shit. We don't know shit. *(To Josh.)* Maybe we *should* take a chance and report to Base.

JOSH. Sir, you know if there are Jeesies in range they'll pick it up the minute we transmit.

MITCH. Yeah. Shit.

CRUSADE

BRITT. Why do they even give us fucking radios?

MITCH. We got to get eyes down there.

HECTOR. I'll go.

BRITT. *(Getting up.)* My turn.

HECTOR. It's always your turn.

BRITT. *(Laughs.)* I'm popular.

HECTOR. Shit. *(Britt checks her sniper rifle.)* Be careful.

BRITT. *(To Mitch.)* If I see any, can I do them?

MITCH. Don't be dumb. If there're any down there they'll hear it and know we're up here.

BRITT. C'mon, you know I only need three more. Three more, Mitch.

MITCH. Britt.

BRITT. Shit.

GALEN. Shouldn't you all go? I mean—

MITCH. We're staying under cover—

GALEN. —if there are any down there.

MITCH. —for now. How long you been up here?

GALEN. I told you. Three years.

MITCH. That's a long time. *(To Britt.)* Hec's right. Be careful.

BRITT. You bet. *(She heads to the door. To Hector.)* Do me a favor, motherfucker? Don't accidentally shoot me on my way back in. *(Hector laughs. Britt flings the door open and charges out. Hector jumps into the open doorway, covering her.)*

MITCH. She okay?

HECTOR. *(Closing the door.)* Yeah.

MITCH. You guys switch. Hec, keep this one covered. Josh, you're on watch. But keep those curtains closed.

GALEN. I seriously doubt there's anyone out there.

MITCH. There could be drones, and they can look through windows. *(He sits in one of the chairs as Hector and Josh switch places.)* So?

CRUSADE

GALEN. So?

MITCH. So we hump these hills for three days and don't see a single cabin. We finally find one and there's somebody in it. Why?

GALEN. I told you. I live here.

MITCH. Yeah. Why?

GALEN. This—*(She lifts her hand to wipe her nose.)*

MITCH. *(Fast as a gunslinger, he draws his sidearm and aims it at her.)* I told you to keep your hands on the table.

GALEN. *(Freezing.)* I didn't—I'm sorry. I'm fighting a cold.

MITCH. Tell me what the fuck you're doing up here.

GALEN. This was our summer place. We bought it twenty years ago. We used to come up here for vacations, long weekends. You know, how people do. Three years ago we moved here permanently.

MITCH. So you're off the grid.

GALEN. That was the idea.

MITCH. Why?

GALEN. Like I said, to get away.

MITCH. And your wife died?

GALEN. A year ago.

MITCH. Then you had to go into town for that, for the funeral.

GALEN. I buried her here.

MITCH. You buried your wife up here in the woods?

GALEN. I was out hunting. She had a stroke. I found...There was no point taking her into town. Like you said, we were trying to stay off the grid.

MITCH. *(Holstering his pistol.)* So what do you live on?

GALEN. Anything I can shoot. Ducks, geese, rabbits.

MITCH. There's got to be bigger game. Lots of tracks around.

GALEN. It's hard to take down anything big when all you have is a shotgun and scattershot. I have a garden out back for vegetables. My wife

CRUSADE

grew flowers. *(Pause.)* And there are fish in the river. I don't make the climb as often as I used to, though. It gets harder every year.

MITCH. That trail goes down to the river?

GALEN. And the highway. Even with the trail, at my age.

MITCH. You've been here three years and no contact with the outside world?

GALEN. I see strangers sometimes. In the woods. But they don't stop. I don't want them to stop.

MITCH. They're probably running from one side or the other. And you're not a Jeesie?

GALEN. I'm a professor. I *was* a professor. Of genetics. My wife was chief librarian at the university. Does that sound like we were Christians? We couldn't stand what was happening. We came up here to get away from it.

MITCH. But to go off the grid at your age, pretty extreme.

GALEN. I was dismissed from the university when I refused to teach Creationism. My wife kept working until they purged her library of unacceptable books. It broke her heart. She loved her books more than...And the harassment. It got worse and worse. Then they invalidated our marriage. All those years we were married and then, all of a sudden...There was nothing for us down there anymore.

MITCH. And since then? Josh, anything?

JOSH. No sir.

GALEN. I don't know much.

MITCH. Hec, at ease. Take a chair.

HECTOR. You got her?

MITCH. I got her. *(Hector unslings his pack and puts it down with his rifle. He sits with relief.)*

GALEN. Can I wipe my nose? I've got a cold coming on. It's been running all day.

CRUSADE

MITCH. (*Gestures permission.*) We're not paranoid, you know. A lot of our patrols come across civilians that seem like good people but turn out to be Christians.

HECTOR. What are we going to do?

MITCH. We're going to find out what's going on in this valley, and if it's anything we're going back to Base and report it.

HECTOR. Maybe we *should* radio it in.

MITCH. Josh?

JOSH. If you want to die.

HECTOR. That's a shit thing coming from a radio man.

JOSH. Just telling the truth.

MITCH. (*To Galen.*) If the Jeesies are close and we transmit a message back to Base they'll immediately pick it up and vector us in. We'll be hot. Targeted. Still, normally we would. But not with that gunship... (*To Josh*) Any sign of her?

JOSH. No sir.

GALEN. I hope you don't mind my saying so, but that young woman is disturbed.

MITCH. Britt? Yeah. She's got reason to be. (*Hector grunts agreement.*)

GALEN. What are you going to do with me?

MITCH. Nothing. Don't worry, doctor. We're not the enemy. You do what you're told you'll be fine. We get what we came for we're gone, and you can go back to being Jane Hermit.

GALEN. What do you think is happening?

MITCH. I don't know and I don't speculate. We're Recon. We observe and report.

GALEN. And you're the army?

MITCH. The U.S. Army. What's left of it. How much do you know?

GALEN. I know the Christians took the White House and Congress. I know they started a new war in the Middle East. And called a

CRUSADE

constitutional convention. That's when we moved up here. That was the last straw.

MITCH. We're way past that now.

GALEN. Their new constitution went through?

MITCH. Oh, it went through. It got ratified.

HECTOR. (*Gestures.*) Ratify this.

MITCH. (*Laughs.*) Yeah. (*To Galen.*) What did you say your name was?

GALEN. Galen.

MITCH. Doctor Galen, you now live in a country where Christianity is the official religion. The *only* religion. The only religion allowed. And not *regular* Christianity—not a Christianity you'd recognize—extreme fundamentalism. The America you grew up with is gone. The America *I* grew up with is gone. Evangelical crazies run the government. But having power isn't enough for them. They're fanatics, they're not happy unless you believe what they believe. You have to convert. You have to submit to their born-again baptism, or they send you to Salvation Camp.

HECTOR. So they can save your soul.

MITCH. Unless you're one of us. The camps are for civilians. We're combatants. We get special treatment.

GALEN. So you're like a resistance?

MITCH. We're not a resistance—we're the U.S. Army defending our country. We took an oath to defend the Constitution—the Constitution, not *their* constitution. Right? (*Hector does a slow, ironic salute. Mitch laughs.*) It must be nice, living up here, above it all.

GALEN. It was.

MITCH. Like I said, doctor, you got nothing to fear from us.

GALEN. I just want to be left alone.

MITCH. Good luck with that. The war's come to your neighborhood.

GALEN. It's not my war.

CRUSADE

MITCH. You're a scientist. They love to get their hands on scientists. You're like the worst kind of heathen there is except for us.

GALEN. I can agree to be baptized. I *was* baptized, a long time ago.

MITCH. Shit, we were *all* baptized. My family's Episcopalian. Hec's a Catholic.

HECTOR. On a good day.

JOSH. Not me.

MITCH. Yeah, except for Josh. He got a bar mitzvah. This baptism is different.

GALEN. How is it different?

MITCH. You have to accept Jesus as your personal savior. That's not such a big deal. Anybody can say that. But you also have to renounce everything else. Whatever else you might believe in, no matter what it is—whatever religion. And not just religion. *Freedom* of religion, freedom of speech, the entire Bill of Rights. You can go along with it. Lots of people do. If you want to spend your life knowing you're a traitor to everything America ever stood for.

GALEN. Does your side have any chance of winning?

MITCH. Hard to say. Most of the country is gone. All the big cities. They hate the cities, they're full of heathens. Main reason we've survived this long is most of the army's over fighting their crusade. But you never know. There're still parts of the country that're free, pockets like ours. Mostly out here in the West. And war's a funny thing.

GALEN. Funny?

MITCH. Unpredictable. We could win.

GALEN. You believe that?

MITCH. We all have to believe something. *(To Hector.)* Hec, switch with Josh. *(To Josh.)* Get on the radio.

JOSH. Sir, we can't transmit.

MITCH. We can listen.

CRUSADE

JOSH. Sir. *(Hector takes up his rifle and relieves Josh at the window. Josh goes to the table, puts his rifle on it, starts working the radio. He puts on headphones.)*

GALEN. What did she mean about needing three more?

MITCH. Britt? That's her quota. She needs twenty-three Jeesies. She's done twenty so far.

GALEN. Done?

MITCH. Killed.

GALEN. She's *killed* twenty people? That young woman?

MITCH. She's a hell of a shooter. You wouldn't think it to look at her, but she's a natural.

HECTOR. She's motivated.

MITCH. Yeah.

GALEN. But she's killed twenty people?

MITCH. It's not an army quota. It's her own. Her own personal mission.

GALEN. But, my God, twenty—

MITCH. She's a soldier. A damn good one. She's been with us less than two years and she's already made corporal.

HECTOR. Bitch.

MITCH. *(Laughs.)* Your own fault. You'd still be a sergeant if you hadn't busted that colonel.

HECTOR. He deserved it.

MITCH. Shit, he deserved worse. *(He and Hector are both laughing.)*

GALEN. But why twenty-three?

MITCH. *(He and Hector stop laughing.)* You'll have to ask her that. *(To Josh.)* Figure our position in case we need to call in.

JOSH. Sir?

MITCH. Just in case.

JOSH. Yes sir. *(He hits keys on the keyboard connected to the radio.)*

MITCH. No sign of the chopper?

CRUSADE

HECTOR. No, it's all quiet. Not a—Shit! Mitch! Jeesie! (*Mitch jumps to his feet.*) Wait. (*The door bursts open and KERSHAW comes stumbling into the cabin, followed by Britt. She kicks him in the back and he falls to the floor.*)

BRITT. Hands and knees, motherfucker!

MITCH. What the hell?

BRITT. Mitch, look what I found. A Jeesie. A real live one. How about that?

MITCH. Where?

BRITT. Down the trail. Just standing there taking a piss.

MITCH. (*Quickly standing over Kershaw, draws his pistol.*) How far?

BRITT. About a hundred yards.

MITCH. Any more of them?

BRITT. Nope.

MITCH. You sure?

BRITT. 'Course I'm sure. Don't be silly.

MITCH. Holy shit. Good work, Britt.

BRITT. And hey, I didn't even kill him. (*To Kershaw.*) I didn't kill you, 'cause my lieutenant told me not to. Aren't you lucky?

MITCH. Up on your knees. Hands behind your head! (*Kershaw complies.*) Who are you? The fuck *answer me!*

KERSHAW. Kershaw. Peter. Private. Christian States of America.

MITCH. What's your unit? Where are they? Where's your helmet?

BRITT. He lost it when I took him down.

MITCH. Where's your rifle? He didn't have a rifle?

BRITT. No rifle.

KERSHAW. I threw it away.

MITCH. You threw it away? Where's your unit? Are they *here?*

KERSHAW. I don't know where they are. I'm, I took off night before last.

CRUSADE

MITCH. You took off? You're AWOL?

KERSHAW. I had to.

MITCH. You deserted?

KERSHAW. I had to. I couldn't.

MITCH. You couldn't what?

KERSHAW. Kill. They said I had to. I told them I couldn't. When they called me up. But they wouldn't listen. They said I had to. They said it was my duty. They put me in the infantry. But I can't kill. I won't. My Lord Jesus would never forgive me.

MITCH. What's your unit? *(Pause.)* What's its location? *(Pause.)* What's it doing? *(Pause.)*

KERSHAW. I can't tell you. I won't tell you. Not anything. I'm not going to help you.

MITCH. Tell me. You're a deserter anyway.

KERSHAW. I'm a deserter I'm not a traitor. I'm not going to. You're heathens. I'm not going to help you.

MITCH. *(Places his pistol against Kershaw's forehead.)* I think you better tell us what we want to know. *(Kershaw clasps his hands together, closes his eyes and prays. After a few moments Mitch lowers his gun.)* Shit.

BRITT. Now can I do him?

MITCH. Britt.

BRITT. Mitch, he's a fucking Jeesie. It'll get me to twenty-one.

MITCH. We're taking him back.

BRITT. To Base?

MITCH. For Intel.

BRITT. But shit if he was *this* close.

MITCH. I know. You couldn't see the bottom of the valley?

BRITT. I didn't get that far. *(To Kershaw.)* Motherfucker, you fucked up my mission.

HECTOR. They could be anywhere.

CRUSADE

MITCH. Any sign of the chopper?

BRITT. It's pulled back. No sign at all.

MITCH. Okay, we'll—

JOSH. Lieutenant? I think I got something here.

MITCH. *(To Britt.)* Put him at the table and keep him covered. *(To Josh.)* What?

HECTOR. *(To Britt, as he takes Kershaw by the back of the neck and with one hand lifts him to his feet.)* Glad you're okay.

JOSH. *(To Mitch.)* A new signal. It's pretty strong.

BRITT. *(To Hector.)* I should've done him when I had the chance. Fuck.

MITCH. Encrypted? *(Hector drags Kershaw to the table, puts him in a chair.)*

JOSH. No. I mean yes, but it doesn't look like anything I've seen. It's got to be them.

MITCH. Run it through the decrypt. If it's them how far are they?

JOSH. I can't tell.

MITCH. What's your best guess?

JOSH. I don't know. Strength of signal? Less than ten miles.

MITCH. *(To Galen.)* How long is this valley?

GALEN. Twenty miles or so. We're toward the east end.

JOSH. It's them, sir. I can't break it. They must be using—

MITCH. Shit.

JOSH. —new encryption.

MITCH. *(Pause.)* Right. I'm going down there. *(To Hector and Britt.)*

You two tie this one up. *(To Josh.)* You stay on the radio. See if any other patrols call anything in.

GALEN. What should I do?

MITCH. *(Checking his rifle.)* Just stay out of our way, doctor.

BRITT. Let me come too.

CRUSADE

MITCH. You stay here. And don't kill this one. Intel's going to want him. Hec, give me cover. *(Hector moves beside the door. Mitch throws it open and charges out. Hector covers him. After several seconds he closes the door.)*

HECTOR. I'll cover the windows.

BRITT. I'll cover the Jeesie. *(To Galen.)* You got any rope or tape?

GALEN. Me?

BRITT. I need to tie him up. I don't carry shit like that. I don't take prisoners.

GALEN. Can I go look?

BRITT. Sure, go look. *(Galen exits into the bedroom. Hector is at the windows and Josh is on the radio. Britt sits at the table with Kershaw.)*

You know, I could've fucked you up real bad out there. With your little dick in your hands. Your little Jeesie dick. I thought about it. One shot in the right place and it would've been gone. One minute you're standing there, happy happy, making a widdle pee-pee with your widdle wee-wee. Oh look at me mommy, look what a big boy I am, I'm making a pee-pee, and the next second—WHOOOPS, where'd it go? What happened to my widdle wee-wee? It's gone! And boy oh boy oh boy it hurts! *(Pause.)*

Would've been so easy. *(Pause.)* You know, a lot of shooters, they just hit what they can. They teach us that, just take one out, create a casualty, wounded is good. Fuck that. I always go for the kill shot. Usually the neck, between the helmet and the body armor. It's not easy, but it's the only way, don't you think? If you were a shooter, isn't that what you'd do? Don't you think that's the right approach considering the alternatives? *(Pause.)* You know why I didn't kill you?

KERSHAW. You said. Your lieutenant.

BRITT. That's right, my lieutenant. He told me not to, and I do what Mitch says.

HECTOR. *(Laughs.)* Thank God for that.

CRUSADE

BRITT. He's kept us alive for over a year. He's a good man, he's a lot like my Jimmy. Not like you. Not like any of you.

KERSHAW. I'm a good man.

BRITT. Oh yeah?

KERSHAW. I try to be.

BRITT. How many people have you killed? How many have you rounded up and sent to camps?

KERSHAW. I haven't. Not me.

BRITT. Oh, you're innocent, right? You're a little saint.

KERSHAW. I told you. I won't kill. Not anybody.

BRITT. Yeah, you said that. Well, I will. I do it all the time. In two years I haven't come across a Jeesie who's walked away alive. Not one. I've done twenty of you so far. And I promise, little saint—Mitch or no Mitch, before today is over you are going to be dead. Think about that. Just sit there and think about it.

GALEN. *(Returning from the bedroom.)* I can't find anything. Maybe out in the shed?

BRITT. That's all right. We don't need to tie this one up, do we, little saint? Little "I can't kill anybody?" 'Cause you're so pure and innocent, aren't you?

GALEN. What's wrong with you?

HECTOR. Britt.

BRITT. What's wrong with me? What's wrong with *me*?

GALEN. This young man hasn't done anything to you.

BRITT. You don't know anything. They're all guilty.

HECTOR. Britt, let it go.

BRITT. *(To Galen.)* They all deserve to die. *(Kershaw suddenly knocks Britt's rifle away and grabs Josh's rifle from the table, getting the drop on Britt.)* Shit! *(Hector trains his rifle on Kershaw as Britt starts to reach for her own.)*

CRUSADE

KERSHAW. Drop it! Drop it or she's dead!

HECTOR. Britt! Don't! *(A pause, then Hector and Britt both lower their rifles to the floor.)*

BRITT. Hec, don't worry, he won't shoot me. Will you, little saint? Jesus will never forgive you.

KERSHAW. I don't want to but I will. You're not giving me a choice. I'm not going to sit here and let you murder me.

HECTOR. Nobody's going to murder you.

KERSHAW. *(To Hector, indicating toward Britt.)* Over there!

HECTOR. Take it easy. *(He moves in front of Britt, shielding her.)*

KERSHAW. Not there! Get out of the way!

BRITT. Hec, you're blocking my view.

HECTOR. Stay behind me!

KERSHAW. Move!

BRITT. C'mon, I want to see his face when he does it. When he shows he's no better than the rest of us.

HECTOR. Shut up and stay there!

KERSHAW. I said move! *(Hector doesn't move.)* All right, stay there! Stay right there. I'm not letting you kill me. I'm leaving. May God save your souls. *(He backs toward the door, his rifle trained on them. Suddenly the door opens and Mitch enters. Kershaw pivots to face him.)* Drop it! Put it down! *(Mitch has no choice. He lowers his rifle. Before Hector and Britt can react, Kershaw swings his gun back to them, then back and forth between them and Mitch, who slowly puts his rifle on the floor. Behind Hector, Britt surreptitiously begins reaching for her own gun. Kershaw swings his gun back and forth repeatedly. He is panicking.)* Hands up! All of you! I'll kill you all. Don't make me!

MITCH. Britt! *(Britt sits back up.)*

KERSHAW. Out of the way. I said get out of my way!

MITCH. Sorry, kid. I can't let you go.

CRUSADE

KERSHAW. Move!

HECTOR. Mitch, let him go.

KERSHAW. I'll shoot you if I have to. I'm not going to let you kill me. You're all heathens! *(Mitch steps forward and kicks the door shut behind him.)* Open the door! Now or you're dead!

HECTOR. Mitch!

KERSHAW. Open it! Now! *(Mitch slowly shakes his head. Kershaw tries repeatedly to pull the trigger but can't bring himself to do it.)* Oh God. Oh God.

MITCH. Kid. Hey kid, listen. Listen to me. *(Pause.)* Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done—

KERSHAW. Shut up! Don't you dare!

MITCH. On earth as it is in heaven.

KERSHAW. Shut up!

MITCH. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

KERSHAW. Stop.

MITCH. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

KERSHAW. Please stop.

MITCH. For thine is the kingdom. And the power.

KERSHAW. Oh God. *(With Kershaw's rifle aimed right at him, Mitch puts his hand around the barrel and takes it from him.)*

MITCH. And the glory. *(Kershaw breaks down, falls to his knees, crying, praying.)* For ever and ever. Amen.

KERSHAW. Amen. Lord Jesus forgive me. *(There is silence except for the sound of Kershaw crying as he prays.)*

BRITT. Motherfucker.

MITCH. *(Holding Kershaw's rifle, Mitch picks up his own.)* I thought I told you to tie him up.

BRITT. This one's on me. Sorry, Mitch.

CRUSADE

MITCH. Well, do it now. We don't need this kind of shit. *(Britt looks around, goes to the lamp at the table downstage, unplugs it, and cuts the cord off with her field knife. Mitch takes the rifle back to Josh.)* Keep this with you.

JOSH. Yes sir. Sorry sir.

HECTOR. Jesus, Mitch, you all right?

MITCH. Yeah. Haven't said that in a long time.

HECTOR. How the hell'd you think of it?

MITCH. No fucking idea.

BRITT. Hands behind your back, little saint. *(On his knees, Kershaw complies. She ties his hands, lifts him and takes him to a chair at the table.)*

HECTOR. Anything out there?

MITCH. Didn't get far enough. But there's a switchback further down. Looks like you can see everything from there.

HECTOR. You couldn't check it out?

MITCH. I suddenly got the feeling I should come back.

HECTOR. *(Laughs.)* Maybe God spoke to you.

MITCH. Fuck you.

HECTOR. You want me to go?

MITCH. Britt.

HECTOR. Let me do it.

MITCH. Hold on. Josh?

JOSH. Sir?

MITCH. Anything?

JOSH. Signal's intermittent, but the same, still strong when it comes through.

MITCH. Shit.

HECTOR. I'll go.

MITCH. I better stay here. Britt, you got the Jeesie? *(Hector gets ready.)*

CRUSADE

BRITT. He's not going anywhere.

MITCH. Right. Here's what we're going to do. Hec's going out. You see anything you come right back. Then we're heading back to Base. We're taking the prisoner in for interrogation. In the meantime, we'll switch off guard. I'll go first. Britt, keep your eye on the Jeesie. Josh, stay on the radio.

HECTOR. If the chopper comes back, should I take a shot?

MITCH. Not unless it spots you. Keep your ass hid.

HECTOR. Right.

MITCH. Don't fire at anything unless you really have to. We don't want anybody knowing we're up here.

HECTOR. I know.

MITCH. I want you back here fast. But be careful.

HECTOR. *(Moving to the door.)* Got it.

BRITT. Hey amigo. Vaya con dios.

HECTOR. Your Spanish still sucks. *(Hector throws open the door and dashes out. Mitch covers him, then pulls back in and closes the door.)*

MITCH. I'll cover the windows. *(He mirrors the drill, moving from window to window, peering out.)*

BRITT. This time you move an inch, little saint, you're dead. Understand? *(Pause, then to Galen.)* So, doctor, what's new with you?

GALEN. What?

BRITT. How do you like the war so far?

GALEN. Are you out of your mind?

BRITT. Me? Yeah.

GALEN. All of you. You're all insane. Can't you see how futile this is? Americans shouldn't be fighting other Americans.

BRITT. We shouldn't? Who should we be fighting?

GALEN. What do you mean? Nobody.

CRUSADE

BRITT. But we're Americans. We're always fighting somebody. It's what we do.

GALEN. That's nonsense.

BRITT. Mitch? She says that's nonsense.

MITCH. Shit.

GALEN. Americans hate war.

BRITT. Mitch, she says Americans hate war.

MITCH. Yeah, well, if we do we don't hate it enough. Stick to biology, doctor. Doesn't sound like history is your subject.

GALEN. What's that supposed to mean?

MITCH. It means every generation of my family has gone to war for this country. Two hundred years. Since Gettysburg. We're from Maine. A great, great, great whatever grandfather lost an arm on Little Round Top. We've been a military family ever since, and we've fought in every war, on damn near every continent on Earth. My dad served five years in Iraq before I was even born. My uncle was Special Ops, and after 9/11 they sent him to fight in places he was never allowed to tell us about. *(Pause.)* Don't get me wrong—we've always been proud to serve. We love this country. But a lot of us died doing it and we could do with a little less of it. A little peace would be nice. Instead we get the Jeesies. And we didn't fight for this country for two hundred years to turn it over to a bunch of fanatics who hate freedom. Well, most of us. Right now I've got a brother fighting their holy war in the Middle East.

GALEN. In the Christian army?

MITCH. That's right.

GALEN. Your own brother?

MITCH. My own brother.

GALEN. Well, what if he were here? What if he were on the other side here? Would you kill him? Would you kill your own brother?

MITCH. Me? No.

CRUSADE

GALEN. There, you see?

MITCH. I'd have Britt do it.

BRITT. *(Laughs loudly.)* Ha!

GALEN. You're not serious.

MITCH. He made his choice.

GALEN. But he's your brother.

MITCH. He's also a traitor to his country and our family.

BRITT. I'd do him in a heartbeat.

MITCH. And we didn't start the killing anyway. The Jeesies did. Right, Josh?

JOSH. Sir?

MITCH. The militias.

JOSH. That's right, sir.

MITCH. Tell the professor about your parents. She's been up in the woods. She doesn't know about the camps. *(To Galen.)* Do you know about the camps?

GALEN. No.

MITCH. *(To Josh.)* Go ahead and tell her.

JOSH. *(Pause.)* My parents were in a Salvation Camp. They were rounded up. My sister Rose too. I was in the army, I wasn't there and they didn't get a chance to let me know. I didn't find out 'til after it happened.

(Pause.) The law is you have to accept Jesus as your personal savior and renounce everything else. We were never religious, I mean as Jews, not really. Especially our father. He used to make fun of the rabbis all the time. But you never met a better, kinder man in your life. Mom was the believer. She made him observe the Holy Days. That stuff mattered to her. *(Pause.)* And she wouldn't...she wouldn't do what they said. Take the baptism. Renounce everything but Jesus. Dad tried to get her to. He said it didn't matter, who cared what they made you say out loud? What mattered was what was in your heart. But she, she wouldn't. She said she couldn't. They

CRUSADE

got Rose to, though. Rose didn't want to either, but Dad kept after her, and finally Mom told her she had to. She had to save herself. *(Pause.)* They released her, Rose. After she did the baptism. But she stayed in the camp. She worked as a laborer so she could be near them, to watch over them. Not that she could help. She tried. She snuck them food, but she got caught, and punished, and after that she never got another chance. She...she watched them waste away. They could've saved themselves anytime they wanted, if they'd just given in. But Mom wouldn't, and Dad...Dad wouldn't if she wouldn't. He wouldn't leave her.

GALEN. What happened to them?

MITCH. What do you think happened to them? They starved to death. If you don't accept Jesus they don't feed you. Food is for the faithful.

GALEN. My God.

KERSHAW. That's not true. That's Satanist propaganda.

MITCH. Shit.

KERSHAW. Nothing like that happens.

JOSH. My sister Rose was there. She saw it happen.

KERSHAW. The camps are there to help the fallen achieve the Lord's grace.

MITCH. Kid, you ever been in a Salvation Camp? Or do you just swallow the crap you've been fed by the government? You just believe what they tell you. You really don't know, do you?

KERSHAW. I know you're heathens. I know you lie. You lie about everything. You serve the Lord of Lies. You serve the Devil.

BRITT. We serve the Devil?

KERSHAW. You do.

BRITT. What a fucking fool you are, little saint.

KERSHAW. I'm not a fool and you can't fool me with your lies.

BRITT. How about the truth? Why are you so afraid of the truth?

KERSHAW. I'm not.

CRUSADE

BRITT. Yeah you are. Otherwise, you want to hear it?

KERSHAW. Not from you. You're a liar. You're a killer.

BRITT. I'm a killer but that doesn't make me a liar. *(Pause.)* I wasn't even in the army when they came to our town, your Christian militia. They rounded up everybody for baptisms. By then we all knew if you refused they sent you to a camp. The army was ordered to stay out of it. They put the base on lockdown and left us to the militia. But Jimmy came to get me. My husband Jimmy. He went AWOL to get me. And they caught him, your militia. You know what they did to him? To make an example of him? They crucified him. They said it would bring him closer to Jesus if he died the way Jesus did. *(Pause.)* He was one of the first ones they did that to. And the army didn't do shit. *(Pause.)* And they made me watch. They held my head and made me watch. And then...

MITCH. Britt. You don't have to.

BRITT. Yeah I do. *(Pause.)* He should hear this. The little fucking saint should hear this. *(Pause.)* They didn't crucify me. They took me back to their camp. They put me in a storage unit, away from the other prisoners. They chained me to a stack of ammo boxes. Then when it was dark they did what they really wanted. Of course they couldn't do it in the daylight. *(Pause.)* They came in, one at a time...One of them told me word had got around they had a heathen slut available. That's what he called me, a heathen slut. Another one, he laughed. He said I wasn't a Christian, what did I care? I didn't have any morals anyway. *(Pause.)* Most of them made me swear not to tell anyone. Tell them what? It was dark, on the floor, crammed between those boxes. The only light was behind them when they came through that door. I couldn't see their faces. With the pain and the dark...all I could do was count them. One after the other. One faceless beast after another. *(Pause.)* Twenty-three. Twenty-three of them. Twenty-three. *(Pause.)* They took my husband, my Jimmy. They took the children I'll never...I can't ever...*(Pause.)* I'll kill every one of you. Twenty-three's

CRUSADE

just the beginning. And I don't give a flying fuck whether it's right or wrong. *(Silence.)*

KERSHAW. That's not true. You're making it up. None of that happened.

BRITT. That's what you say to me? I tell you that and that's what you say?

KERSHAW. I don't believe you. You're lying. You all lie. About everything.

BRITT. Too bad you're not a doctor. You could see the scars. The internal scars. *(Pause.)* How long you been up here?

KERSHAW. Where?

BRITT. On the line. In a combat unit.

KERSHAW. They sent me up last week.

BRITT. Last week? You don't know shit.

KERSHAW. I know you're lying.

BRITT. No, you just haven't seen anything yet. In your camp, they have crosses, don't they? They have them in all their camps now. The militia started it but now their army does it too. About twelve feet high? Made from construction lumber?

KERSHAW. Those are for worship.

BRITT. They're for crucifixions. *(To Galen.)* That's what they do to us if they capture us.

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
ORDER A COPY AT WWW.NEXTSTAGEPRESS.COM***