

# TURTLE ON A FENCE POST

*WHY HAS THE WORLD FAILED  
TO CONFRONT THE CLIMATE  
CRISIS?*



# DID THE CLIMATE CRISIS “JUST HAPPEN?”

*Is it humanity's fault?*

*Do we have an intrinsic inability to deal with a slow moving crisis –  
like frogs unaware of danger in a slowly heating pot of water?*

Or are there darker,  
more malevolent forces at work?

**ANY TIME YOU SEE A TURTLE  
UP ON TOP OF A FENCE POST,  
YOU KNOW HE HAD SOME HELP**

**ALEX HALEY**

## HOW IS HUMANITY LIKE A TURTLE?

- Like a hapless turtle stuck on a fence post, humanity is stuck in a climate crisis that didn't happen by itself...
- This is a tale of an oil rich family, a rebel daughter fighting a looming climate disaster, a sibling betrayal, a computer hack, a media smear, an epic confrontation, and a chance for redemption.



## **Turtle On a Fence Post**

**The daughter of an Oil Executive becomes  
a scientist determined to hold Big Oil  
responsible for the climate crisis!**

**BASED ON REAL EVENTS**

# THE TIME IS RIPE FOR THE RIGHT SORT OF CLIMATE STORY

- The press release for the 2024 climate themed short film “More Flames” from Adam McKay’s Yellow Dot Studios and Lucy Stone’s Climate Spring says, in part:
- “In order for audiences to feel empowered to act on the climate crisis, they need to be shown the real root causes of the crisis (not about making everyone feel guilty but understanding the powers that are holding us back), and most crucially the route out of the chaos.”

# WHAT'S IN HERE?

- Story Concepts
- Logline
- Plot Synopsis/Mood Board
- Notable Characters:
- Secondary Characters
- Two events in 2009 catalyzing the dramatic story arc:
  - Climategate
  - UN Copenhagen Climate Summit
- Scientific Elements
- Comparables
- Themes



# LOGLINE

**A young climate scientist with few resources other than her own fierce determination challenges Big Oil, publishing data holding them responsible for the climate crisis. Suddenly her oil executive brother betrays her and smears her research, putting the climate and her career in jeopardy. She fights back from the brink of disaster to lead a global movement revealing the fossil fuel industry's decades-long campaign of lies and misinformation.**

**BASED ON REAL EVENTS**



## BRIEF SYNOPSIS



Zelda, the sister of Oil company executive Adam, becomes a climate scientist. In early 2009 she publishes ice core research holding fossil fuel emissions responsible for global warming and irreversible sea level rise.

Weeks before a UN sponsored climate summit in December, Adam secretly facilitates a computer hack and smear (an event known as "Climategate") discrediting Zelda's research and derailing the summit.

Media sensationalism turns Zelda into a scapegoat and she's besieged by threatening calls. Her research funding is cut off.

Devastated by these setbacks, her youthful self-destructive tendencies re-emerge and she suffers a life-threatening injury.

During her recovery, Zelda is exonerated when a scientific inquiry by the British government clears her name. Resuming her career, she launches into a confrontation with the Fossil Fuel industry over its long campaign of scientific disinformation and publicly calls for whistleblowers to assist her efforts.

Adam is sent to the Oil Co archives to retrieve records of internal scientific climate research. He's shocked by what he finds and begins to understand Big Oil's contribution to climate change.

He sees Zelda on social media and seizes a chance to redeem himself. His wife threatens to leave him if he jeopardizes his job. Filled with rage, he hatches a plan to confront his boss at gunpoint and force him to tell the media the truth about hacking Zelda's email.



# ZELDA WASHINGTON: PROTAGONIST

Ostracized by her strict Oil company executive father, Zelda is raised by her aunt. She overcomes personal foibles and a near death experience to build a career as a climate scientist and pursue the truth of how the fossil fuel industry used wealth & political power to avoid responsibility for their climate destroying behaviors.



MARYANNE,  
ZELDA'S  
AUNT,  
SURROGATE  
MOTHER AND  
BEST FRIEND



# ADAM WASHINGTON: ANTAGONIST

- Adam grew up respecting and emulating his successful executive father and blamed his sister Zelda's rebelliousness for her exile from the family. He coasted through school, helped by his father's business ties, and eagerly started climbing the corporate ladder at his father's Oil company.



When he finds out his sister is a climate scientist doing research to hold oil and gas companies responsible for global warming, he's shocked. His boss asks him to take advantage of a rare meeting with his sister at his father's funeral to find out what she and her colleagues are up to. Adam figures he's got nothing to lose and plenty to gain by pleasing his boss and defending his company.

# CRYPTO – THE HACKER

Crypto is a hacker for hire. He doesn't question the consequences of the work he's paid well to do.



## “SPIRIT GUIDE” GRETA

As Zelda recuperates from a near death experience, Greta appears in her fever dreams, ushering her first through fearful visions of climate dystopia, then visions of successful adaptation, inspiring her recovery and strengthening her resolve to fight for the future of humanity and a livable climate.





# SECONDARY CHARACTERS



# BASED ON HISTORICAL EVENTS:

## “CLIMATEGATE” NOV 2009

Less than a month before a UN sponsored international climate summit, hackers invaded a private climate scientist email system and smeared the world’s leading experts. The culprit has never been identified.

**ARTICLES**

### "CLIMATEGATE" UNDERMINED BELIEF IN GLOBAL WARMING AMONG MANY AMERICAN TV METEOROLOGISTS

By Robert M. Anderson, John White, and Benjamin W. Peterson

CLIMATEGATE, THE UNCOVERED EMAILS OF THE LEADING CLIMATE SCIENTISTS, HAS SHAKEN THE BELIEF OF AMERICAN TV METEOROLOGISTS IN GLOBAL WARMING, ACCORDING TO A SURVEY BY THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER.

The Pew Research Center conducted a survey of 1,000 American adults in October and November 2009. The survey found that 63% of respondents believe that global warming is real, but 37% believe it is not. The survey also found that 53% of respondents believe that the climate is warming, but 47% believe it is not. The survey also found that 63% of respondents believe that global warming is caused by human activities, but 37% believe it is not. The survey also found that 63% of respondents believe that global warming is a serious problem, but 37% believe it is not. The survey also found that 63% of respondents believe that global warming is a problem that needs to be addressed, but 37% believe it does not. The survey also found that 63% of respondents believe that global warming is a problem that needs to be addressed, but 37% believe it does not.

**HACKED GLOBAL WARMING EMAIL**

I'VE JUST COMPLETED MIKE'S NATURE [THE SCIENCE JOURNAL] TRICK OF ADDING IN THE REAL TEMPS TO EACH SERIES FOR THE LAST 20 YEARS (I.E. FROM 1981 ONWARDS) AND FROM 1961 FOR KEITH'S TO HIDE THE DECLINE."

SOURCE: GUARDIAN.CO.UK

**GLOBAL WARMING HOAX**

**2009**

**GLOBAL WARMING**

Global Warming Hoax Exposed by Climategate

## BASED ON HISTORICAL EVENTS:

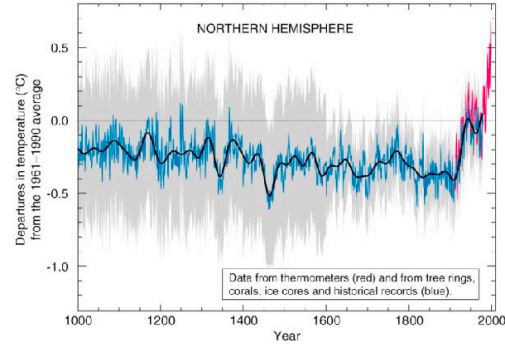
## COPENHAGEN UN CLIMATE SUMMIT – DEC 2009

The highly anticipated goal was to have both developed and developing countries agree to concrete CO<sub>2</sub> emission reductions to stop the catastrophic increase in global temperatures. The Summit failed miserably because of Climategate and other factors.



# CLIMATE SCIENCE

Air trapped in ice cores drilled from glaciers can be analyzed to tell us much about global air composition and temperatures as far back as a million years ago!



# COMPARABLES

- “DARK WATERS”
- “ERIN BROCKOVICH”
- “THE INSIDER”
- “SILKWOOD”
- “JFK”

# THEMATIC SUMMARY

- An Oil family is torn by conflict when the source of its financial stability is also responsible for humanity's biggest existential crisis
- One child groomed for corporate success, another disowned by a patriarch
- One sibling betrays the other when they find themselves on opposite sides of the climate crisis
- Unsolved Mystery: In 2009, who hacked into Climate Scientist emails and smeared their research, just before International Climate Negotiations??
- Corporate malfeasance: The fossil fuel industry spent billions of dollars discrediting climate science while hiding the fact that decades ago, their own scientists predicted climate destruction caused by fossil fuel emissions

## SCREENWRITER BIO

- Patrick Costello writes screenplays and short stories with political, social justice and climate themes.
- He has a finance background, published a book on Low-Carbon Investing and helps lead two Bay Area environmental non-profits: FossilFreeCA.org and 350Marin.org.
- He is a musician, songwriter, singer and composer and leads the social justice band *Knabokov Collective*.

## CONTACT INFO

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