

EMERY
A Verse Play
by Michael Quinn

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EMERY

CHARACTERS

EMERY — mid-twenties
JOHN — 33 years old
CORINNE — 55 years old
HOWARD — mid-seventies
WOMAN — mid-forties
GIRL — 15 years old
MALCOLM — early thirties

TIME

The Time is 2140 and
the winter of 2141.

PLACE

The Play takes begins in Ravenna, Nebraska,
and follows a stretch of land across the nation
to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

EMERY

SCENE 1.

2140.

Ravenna, Nebraska. The windfarm. A late-sprung town of concrete, asphalt, and plexiglass.

EMERY CORTEZ, mid-twenties, sits at a table in her apartment. The room is decorated sparsely. It's dim. She's a long, sinewy woman. Her hair's out of the way. She's organizing a large number of pills from one large container into baggies. She goes on for a while like that, mouthing words to herself.

A knock at the door. She gets up and checks the peephole. She opens the door.

It's JOHN LANC, 33. He slips inside.

JOHN. Are you done yet?

EMERY. Almost. Keep your voice down.

JOHN. Jeremy told me, they're doing checks all up and down this block tonight.

EMERY. I know.

JOHN. So let's go.

EMERY. Okay, okay. I told you. I'm almost done.
(Pause.) Do you have the cash?

JOHN. Yeah.

EMERY. Let me see it.

JOHN. Here.

An exchange.

EMERY. How much is this?

JOHN. Five thousand.

EMERY. Alright.

She cuts a tenth of it.

EMERY

EMERY. Here.

JOHN. *(Pause.)* Thank you.

She leads him to the table.

EMERY. Here's the first half, all settled. These fifteen go to Harbor Scott. Don't take less than fifteen hundred. He's going to try to squeeze you. He's a pig.

JOHN. Alright.

EMERY. These twenty-five go to Kinsley Bronsted, over in Brewerytown. *(Pause.)* Twenty-three hundred. They're all stamped. See?

JOHN. Yeah.

EMERY. Okay. Good. Ten bags to Green. Ten to Danny, fifteen to Yolanda, ten to Louis. All the usual rates. Alright?

JOHN. Yeah.

EMERY. Good. That should be it. Do you have anything else for me?

JOHN. I've got something.

He pulls out a tightly rolled joint.

EMERY. Thank you.

Emery pulls a hair clip from her head, she uses it to clinch the filter of the joint. She lights it and takes a hit. They pass it back and forth.

EMERY. Who'd you get this from?

JOHN. Georgie Rudineski.

EMERY. She sells pot now?

JOHN. Just on the side.

EMERY

EMERY. She's not moving a lot?

JOHN. No. She's not *moving* anything.
She just gave me some as a favor.

EMERY. *(Pause.)* What'd you give her?

JOHN. Couple Xan.

EMERY. Alright.
Don't go around giving freebies, you know.

JOHN. It's not free. It was a trade.

EMERY. Just be
careful.

JOHN. I am careful.

She gives him a serious look.

EMERY. Alright.
Jordan's supposed to be here soon. We should
clean this up.

JOHN. She's out this late?

EMERY. Yeah.

JOHN. How long's she supposed to be?

EMERY. Half hour.

JOHN. Oh.

Emery takes his hand. She looks at him.

JOHN. What?

She just stares.

JOHN. What?

EMERY

EMERY. Goddammit.

JOHN. Fuck.

John bolts to the window and closes the shutters. Emery grabs up the bills and tucks them into her, running to the other window and bracing herself against the shutters. The lights flicker. The dust storm rolls through — stones and particles fling against the windows, against the building — a massive, shaking horror. The sound becomes a roar of car alarms and cracking concrete. The city braces into itself.

The tremors subside.

Emery and John exhale.

JOHN. You have the pills?

EMERY. Yes.

JOHN. You have them?

EMERY. Yes.

JOHN. Let me see.

EMERY. I told you.

She untucks the package from her jacket.

JOHN. Alright.

EMERY. Where's Jordan?

JOHN. She's only down
the block, right?

EMERY. I hope she wasn't outside —

JOHN. She's smart, I'm sure she's fine.

EMERY. A fucking —
a dust storm.

EMERY. I need to go out looking. Here, take all of this. Just take it. And get the money for it, I don't want you coming back here with five

EMERY

hundred dollars less than you owe me
like last time.

JOHN. I won't.

EMERY. Good. Fuck. Where is she —

Emery prepares to go out — grabs a coat, ties her boots, wraps her scarf.

JOHN. She's alright, Emery. She knows to duck
away. Anyway, she was inside.

EMERY. She was out — it's *late*, John. I shouldn't have —

JOHN. Call down the block.

EMERY. I'm going.

A knock at the door.

EMERY. Oh, Jesus.

There's JORDAN CORTEZ, 18, in the hallway. She's got a large wound in her gut. She's clutching herself, and shaking hard from the center of her chest. She falls forward into Emery.

EMERY. Get the kit!

EMERY

SCENE 2.

One year later. John's home. He's at the table, washing his clothing.

He scrubs viciously at a pair of thick pants.

Emery enters from another room.

EMERY. I just got off the line with Kinsley. She said Richard never made it to her house last night. She can't reach him.

JOHN. She can't?

EMERY. No.
What is that, blood?

JOHN. It's muck.

EMERY. What happened?

JOHN. Nothing. I slipped last night by the Yardhouse.

EMERY. Were you drunk?

JOHN. No. Just a couple drinks.

EMERY. Right. Richard never made it, so that puts us behind. He probably got picked up coming from Pittsburgh, that's what happened to the guy before him. Probably snapped his phone. But still. Gives me nerves.

JOHN. I'm sure nothing will come back here. Is there anyone else bringing in product?

EMERY. I'm sure. But they're not selling to me. Listen, John. I wouldn't ask this normally, I need some money.

JOHN. What?

EMERY

EMERY. Things have been tight since the beginning of the summer. I knew this was going to get harder, but — I'm sorry. I have some debts. Around town.

JOHN. Alright. How much do you need?

EMERY. Ten thousand.

JOHN. Ten thousand?

EMERY. Yeah.

JOHN. Alright.

John goes to his mattress. He takes a knife from his pocket and slits the side panel. He reaches in and removes a lockbox. She watches him unlock the padlock and count the money. He holds it to her.

JOHN. Here.

EMERY. Thank you.

John, I need something else too. Do you know where I can get a gun?

JOHN. You have to tell me what's going on.

EMERY. I can't.

JOHN. You're gonna kill someone?

EMERY. I'm not. I'm not going to kill anyone. I just don't want to be afraid.

JOHN. Emery, I don't know.

She moves to take his hand.

EMERY. Please.

JOHN. You're safe here already.

EMERY

EMERY. John.

JOHN. Are you
going to pay or are you taking it
on credit?

EMERY. Credit.

JOHN. You're the only person
I'd do this for. You know that?

She nods. He flips open the lockbox and takes out a small, snub-nose revolver and a handful of bullets.

JOHN. I only
have ten rounds.

EMERY. How long have you had that?

JOHN. A long time. Have you shot a gun before?

EMERY. No.

JOHN. Come here.

He summons her to the center of the room, demonstrates.

JOHN. You always keep this part
pointed away from you, alright? Hold it
out in front, line it with the sights.
Use both hands. It's heavier than you think.
The kickback, you'll feel it. You load the bullets
one by one. Pull back the hammer till
the second click. Then breathe, aim, and pull.

EMERY. Aim, and pull.

JOHN. Show me.

She demonstrates. Her wiry arms shoot forth from her torso when she raises the barrel. It's like a long flower, stemming from her chest, blooming at the metal.

EMERY. How do you know if you've hit someone?

JOHN. Depends where you hit. Just aim right, hope

EMERY

SCENE 3.

Later that night. Emery stands inside of the last phone booth. Crickets accelerate in the nighttime heat. She grips the phone.

EMERY. Corinne, are you — *(Pause.)* Can I speak to Corinne?
Is she there? Corinne? It's Emery. I need
somewhere to stay tonight, alright? I have
to see about something in Philadelphia.
I'm getting on a freight bus tonight.
There's no room? You're sure? What's going on
in *Des Moines*, Corinne? Look, I've got cash.
I only need some space on the floor.
I'm not bringing any trouble. *(Pause.)*
It's only a couple hours I'll be there.
Really? Well, I'm coming, so you should
figure that out. No, I'm calling you
from a payphone. Yeah, they're listening
to all this on your end. Fine. Work it out.

She hangs up. Then she grabs the phone and bangs it against the plexiglass panel over and over and over. She grabs her head, holds herself for a moment. She dials again.

EMERY. Yeah. I'm alright. Are — are you drunk?
Yeah. I'll see you tomorrow.

EMERY

SCENE FOUR.

A highway-side hotel outside of Des Moines. We're in the quaint lobby. There's a front desk with a receptionist, CORINNE, 55. The place is generally ugly. Emery enters. They exchange a look.

EMERY. Hey.

CORINNE. I told you not to come around.
I'm going to need an explanation, Emery.
A good one. Don't lie to me. You know
how much heat is on us right now?

EMERY. I just
need somewhere to stay tonight.

CORINNE. I'm not
an idiot. What's in that bag? You want
to tell me, or is it another secret?

EMERY. Corinne, I only need a room. No trouble.

CORINNE. I don't like waiting to get picked off.
I haven't heard from Richard in two weeks.
Don't tell me to wait again. We have a kid.

EMERY. I know.

CORINNE. What am I supposed say?

Silence.

EMERY. I'm sorry.

CORINNE. You should be. That's the least
you should be. Find somewhere else to sleep.
If I were you, I'd go back to Ravenna.
People are only gonna get less
friendly from here. A heat wave is coming.

EMERY. I have to get to Philadelphia.

CORINNE. What for?

EMERY. I need to see a doctor, Corinne.

EMERY

SCENE FIVE.

Inside the motel bedroom. Emery is dead asleep on the mattress. Corinne steps in quietly, coffee in hand, sits on the bed, wakes her.

CORINNE. It's almost six. There's a man here, Howard,
he's gonna drive you to the bus.

EMERY. You can't
take me?

CORINNE. No. But I brought you coffee.

She accepts it.

EMERY. I had a dream. I barely slept.

CORINNE. Here, eat.

EMERY. I blinked, woke up, I was in the plain,
the middle, outside Ravenna, the biggest wind
turbine — crashed into the land. The blades
were stabbing into dirt, maybe it was
still sinking. And the whole thing was covered
in this long, wide, chain-linked fence. Like a net
around the turbine. And Jordan was there.
She wore a purple dress. I don't know it,
but in the dream, it was a dress I used
to wear. You know I've never worn a dress.
And the sky turned black, like swallowed up.
Like, gone. And she stood in front of me,
mouthing something I couldn't understand.
So I screamed at her until she went quiet.
The dress dried up. Turned brown. Turned stiff. Broke.
Then I woke up.

CORINNE. Does that happen often?

EMERY. I don't know. I try not to think about it.
I don't dream most nights. I don't understand
why that window broke. Why no one had
reinforced it.

CORINNE. I don't know.

EMERY

EMERY. Me neither.
I have to get going.

CORINNE. The bus is eight?

EMERY. Seven-fifty.

CORINNE. Howard, he will drive.
Drink up and wash off. There's towels in there.
Take care of yourself, Emery. Take care.

EMERY

SCENE FIVE.

Emery sits in the passenger seat of an eighteen-wheeler.

The driver is an older man, Howard.

HOWARD. Sun is beating down.

EMERY. Yeah, it is.

HOWARD. How far you going?

EMERY. The bus depot.

HOWARD. And
after that?

EMERY. East.

HOWARD. Where east?

EMERY. Couple places.
Fort Wayne. Farther after.

HOWARD. You have something
to attend to?

EMERY. Guess you could say that.

HOWARD. Someone to attend to. Heat wave's there,
covering the whole seaboard, I heard.

EMERY. I heard.

HOWARD. Gonna be covering more soon. It's no joke
when that happens. Gets worse in the east.
Wildfires everywhere. The smoke goes up.
Everyone's breathing in. You ever seen
asphalt melt?

EMERY. No.

HOWARD. You haven't?

EMERY

EMERY. No.
I haven't.

HOWARD. Ugly. Smells. I've seen cars sink
when it's really bad. How was it, ten
years ago, that was the worst one.
That July. Heard some guy come over
the radio. That was when the trucks
were self-driving. Fell asleep, the thing
didn't stop. He woke up fifty miles
from anywhere, middle of Ohio,
the tires melted into the asphalt.
No water. Kept the AC going long
as he could, but you don't stand a chance.
Came over the radio crying. Some
other guy told him shut up and smoke
a cigarette. Just wait for it.

EMERY. Did someone
go and get him?

HOWARD. I'm sure they got the cargo.
Bad to travel right now. During the heat.

EMERY. I don't have a choice.

HOWARD. That's too bad.
Gotta be careful. Corinne said you're
alone. Scares me.

EMERY. It scares you?

HOWARD. Bad things
happen. Not enough of everything
to go around. People got a hunger.
It's not like before — how old are you?

EMERY. Twenty-one.

HOWARD. Jesus. Not like before.
Everyone had it all. Had so much.
Stuffed our faces. Ingested everything
in sight. Ate the whole country. I swear,

EMERY

these days I'd expect some of the people
to claw someone apart for things we used
to throw away. Hungry. Everyone's
hungry.

EMERY. Yeah.

HOWARD. I know you don't like me
talking, but I don't — no company.

EMERY. Yeah, I'm sure.

HOWARD. Lose a lot of people
in the heat.

EMERY. I'm sure.

HOWARD. Lot of people.
(Pause.) You ever lost anyone?

She looks at him.

HOWARD. Parents?

EMERY. Never knew them.

HOWARD. How's that?
It's too bad.

EMERY. How's that? I don't know.
They came up from, I don't know, somewhere during
the hurricanes twenty years ago.
What do you think happened to them?
They put me with a family in Colorado.
Haven't talked to them since I left.

Long pause.

HOWARD. You chose to come *here*?

EMERY. Work. The windfarm.

HOWARD. Yeah.
The windfarm. Half the country's burnin' oil.

EMERY

EMERY. I know.

HOWARD. The fuckin' *windfarm*.

EMERY. Yeah. I know.

HOWARD. I know what you do in Ravenna. Corinne told me.

EMERY. Oh.

HOWARD. Dangerous.

EMERY. Not for me.
It's not dangerous. I'm not — look, I get that I'm some young girl, but I've never seen anyone busted that didn't have it coming. No one gets their hands on me, alright? And when I shouldn't be talking, I know when to shut up. I made it this far.

HOWARD. You did.
I'll shut up.

EMERY. That's not what I meant.

HOWARD. We're almost there.

EMERY

GIRL. Don't tell her.

EMERY. I won't.

GIRL. You probably will.

EMERY. I won't, really.

GIRL. You want one?

EMERY. I'm alright.

Silence. The girl drinks.

GIRL. What's in Philadelphia?

EMERY. Nothing.

GIRL. Nothing?

EMERY. That's what I said. How long does this normally take? I'm thirsty.

GIRL. It takes a while.

It's deep in the ground.

(Miming a drill with her finger into her drink.)

All the way down.

Deep down. And there's a big cave, and it's just getting drier and drier.

(Mocking the woman.) "Make yourself at home." No one comes here asking for water.

Pause.

GIRL. *(Taking a sip.)* Aren't you supposed to be watching me?

EMERY. Apparently.

GIRL. Doing a pretty shitty job.

EMERY. I'm gonna be honest, I'm not entirely invested. What's she want me to watch you for?

EMERY

GIRL. I'm a bad kid. I'm — you know, whatever.
At risk.

EMERY. How's that?

GIRL. I'll do anything
to get out of this — pit.

Silence.

GIRL. I hate brown grass.
Have you ever seen the real ocean?

EMERY. Not — I can't remember it. But wait
long enough, you'll probably see it here.

GIRL. Isn't Philadelphia on the coast?

EMERY. It is. There's no flood that far north yet.

GIRL. Oh. I thought it was all gone.

EMERY. No.

Silence.

EMERY. Here,
you want something?

GIRL. What's that?

EMERY. I have — um. Here.
(She's retrieved a small stamp from her bag.)
It's just a stamp. There's a little drawing
of the Pacific Ocean. You see?

GIRL. Yes.

She takes it and stares at it.

GIRL. Thank you.

EMERY. Yeah.

EMERY

GIRL. Did you ever see snow?

EMERY. Not recently.

GIRL. Ever?

EMERY. Yeah.

GIRL. Really?

EMERY. Yeah. Really.

GIRL. What's it like?

EMERY. It's cold. It's white.

GIRL. But what was it like to see it?

EMERY. Well. I was
outside one night, collecting little branches
and kindling. It got cold that day, big shaft
of freeze was lowered down over everything.
You know what Nebraska looks like?

GIRL. Like here.

EMERY. Like here. Flat. Big. The sky's — huge.
Still. Quiet. And slowly, these little specks
of white start coming down from the sky.
Then there were a thousand. I'd never seen
it before. They were falling down,
thick and hard. I stuck my hand out,
felt it, felt them all brushing my hand,
turning to water on my palm.
(She mimes with her hands, tapping her palm with her fingers.)
I held
my tongue out for one. *(Pause.)* It tasted like ash.
Sour. *(Pause.)* I only tasted a couple more.

Pause.

GIRL. Wish I could see anything like that.
Wish the water didn't taste like metal.

EMERY

She rests her head in her hands. Silence.

GIRL. You got anything else in that bag?

EMERY. No.

Pause.

EMERY. Look, if you want to get out of here
so bad, I have a little bit of money.

GIRL. You do?

EMERY. Yeah.

GIRL. You'd give me some?

Quiet. The girl looks at Emery and nods. Emery grabs her bag and starts counting out money. Then, the girl lurches forward and snatches the envelope out of Emery's hand.

GIRL. How much
is this? How much is in here? Oh my God.

Emery's up. Her hand is inside her bag. She's gripping the gun.

GIRL. What else is in there?

Emery stares for a long moment. Her hand relaxes.

EMERY. Just — take it. Take it.

GIRL. Is there something wrong with you?

Silence.

EMERY. Where's the
water.

The woman returns and sets down a glass of water on the counter. Emery grabs it and drinks.

EMERY. Thank you.

She exits.

SCENE SEVEN.

Emery alone.

EMERY. God. We're far from home, aren't we? Aren't we. I'm sorry, you know. About all this. I never intended — there was nothing else, you know? I wasn't cut out for this. I don't think ever, but not now. I can't believe you're in there. I find it hard to believe. *(She laughs.)* I was just *told* by a stick, you know? And I have to figure all this out by myself? What a life I've made for myself. You know, if Jordan were here, things would be different. I don't know why I'm telling you about her. There used to be so many things, you know. Apple trees everywhere in Ravenna. There used to be green — *sprigs* all the time, little buds on brown branches. So small. Now they all just burn up in the sunlight, drop all over the ground, litter themselves everywhere. I don't know what to make of that. I read about it so much. I wish I hadn't. I don't think there was a time before this. I don't think we deserve anything else. I guess I'm just told that, too, that there *was* something else. God, we're a long way from home. If there's any part of you that is — that is John — I'm sorry. *(Pause.)* Nevermind. I would be a good mother, you know. I wouldn't have let any of this happen to you. None of the things that happened to me. I never knew mine. I only think about her in the winter, I wonder if she's somewhere cold, like it's supposed to be. I don't know how many years ago that thought came into my head, but it never leaves. It just echoes, every year. December. I wonder if she's somewhere cold. *(Pause.)* I wouldn't do this if I didn't know it was right. But if you could grow up, old enough to understand the things that are wrong, all the things that are

EMERY

missing, you'd understand. None of this
is life, anymore. It's just scraping
what's left of the food onto your plate and cramming
into a dusty room and waiting. So
much waiting. There was a time when we talked
about this. Just once, but it stuck with me.
I kind of wish it hadn't. I was sitting
with John on the fire escape, and he me
cigarettes and handed them to me.
We had this old song on, this old rock song.
He told me he used to play the guitar, always
wanted to name his daughter after this —
after this song. I don't want to tell
you the name because I told myself
I'd never say it, okay? I asked him what
daughter. And he looked at me like, like
he was so young. And there was — sadness
in his eyes. And I just laughed at him.
I laughed. I never loved him. Couldn't have.
I would love you. I would.

EMERY

SCENE EIGHT.

The inside of a doctor's office in Philadelphia. It is quaint and basic. The floor is hardwood. The secretary's desk is vacant. Emery enters.

She looks around carefully. The air is still in the room. She wanders over toward a coffee table and fingers the magazine pages. She sits, then decides to stand.

Eventually, MALCOLM enters. He's in a doctor's coat. He's come in to put something on the secretary's desk — a file or something.

MALCOLM. Hello, I'm sorry — the clinic is closed.

Emery says nothing. Her expression opens up.

Malcolm looks at her for a hard moment.

MALCOLM. What are you doing here?

EMERY. I'm sorry.
I needed you.

MALCOLM. What are you doing here,
Emery?

EMERY. I'm sorry —

MALCOLM. Shut up.
I don't want to hear that. How did you
find me?

EMERY. I heard from people back home.
They told me Philadelphia, they told
me you became a doctor.

MALCOLM. How long
ago did you hear that?

EMERY. Probably
five or six years ago.

Silence.

MALCOLM. Five or six years.

EMERY

Heard anything about me since?

EMERY. No.

MALCOLM. I didn't hear a thing about you. *(Pause.)*
Nothing from you. Or Jordan.

EMERY. I know.

MALCOLM. You left like that. I said they must be dead.
I was sure you were —

EMERY. I know.

MALCOLM. — were dead.
A seventeen-year-old girl skipping town.
You know how long Mom waited for you two?
(Pause.) Do you?

EMERY. No.

MALCOLM. Until she died,
Emery. I know you two had problems,
but that wasn't anything to do.
You could've sent a message. You could've done
something.

Silence.

MALCOLM. Where'd you come from?

EMERY. Ravenna.

MALCOLM. Nebraska? The windfarm?

EMERY. Yes.

MALCOLM. Jesus Christ.
I thought you would've gone — I didn't know
you were that desperate. Where's Jordan?
Did she come with you?

Silence. Emery closes her eyes, then opens them.

EMERY

EMERY. Yeah. I need an abortion,

MALCOLM. You — what?

EMERY. I'm pregnant, I don't want it.

MALCOLM. Yeah, I know, I — Emery.

EMERY. Malcolm, what?

MALCOLM. I'm not that kind of a doctor.

EMERY. What?

MALCOLM. You need
a different — I'm just a physician, Emery.
I don't — I can't do that for you.

EMERY. Can't you?

MALCOLM. No, Emery —

EMERY. Isn't there —
Is there a pill?

MALCOLM. Not anymore.

EMERY. Please.

MALCOLM. I can't, Em. But —
you know, I know someone here who can.

EMERY. Can't you?

MALCOLM. No.

EMERY. I don't want anyone else
to touch me, Malcolm.

Pause.

MALCOLM. It'll be alright.
I can help you, Emery.

EMERY

EMERY. I came so far.

MALCOLM. I know.

Silence.

MALCOLM. Let me take a look at you.

She paces over to him. Their hands meet.

MALCOLM. Come into the office.

EMERY. Yes.

MALCOLM. It'll be alright.

EMERY. Yes.

MALCOLM. Do you feel alright?

EMERY. Yes.

SCENE NINE.

A year later.

A park bench in Philadelphia. It is very bright outside. Emery and John sit next to each other.

EMERY. It's been good here. Better. I couldn't — you don't know, I think, how many nights I was up awake in that apartment. The spot on the floor where she dropped, I couldn't ever make it — put it out of my head. It was always there. Every night. You'd hold me and I'd be just thinking, oh God, oh God. There wasn't anything else I could think, you know. Dread. It was Dread talking to me, having me, holding me, doing nothing but attaching itself all over my body, my hips and my shoulders, Dread screaming at me. All day and all night. Have you felt that way?

JOHN. Yeah, Emery. Of course I have.

EMERY. I heard things about you, John, from everyone. I never liked to believe them. I told myself — I know it was a different time. I had this clear vision of the world, of the heat, of the cold, of everything. All I knew is that it was dark. Dark, dark. It was always nighttime. I never felt any other way about it. I was with you, and you had run up then from Arizona with those people. You had done things, I knew why you had that gun. I saw the serial number scratched out on it. I was never dumb, at least. I was just — I didn't care about pretending. It was alright, pretending was alright with me. I liked it with you. I liked it when we'd sit outside on hot nights. I liked sweating with you. Being covered in sweat with you.

JOHN. Yeah.

EMERY. I don't care that you killed anyone, John. I would've done it just as easy. I don't want to know how it happened, but I don't care. I never really did. Don't think that's why I didn't come back. It wasn't about you. It wasn't about you at all. God, it's nicer here. Can you feel it too? I hated the dust in Ravenna. I hated it every morning. I hated seeing it swirl. I didn't like the grass, even when it was green. All I ever heard were turbines, swinging, ringing, driving me — isn't the smell of the water so nice? You know, it comes up higher now, during the storms you can watch it crash over the concrete banks. These big pillars of river water, fresh water screaming into pikes. Soon it'll come over and stay. But it doesn't yet. I don't think I can leave. There's better work here. I don't have to — don't have to hustle anyone. I don't have to hide anything.

Silence.

JOHN. What happened to the baby?

She looks at him. Silence, then speaks.

EMERY. I miscarried.
My brother looked at me and said, "You're not pregnant, Emery." I almost swung at him. I almost did. He was asking me all these questions, how many tests I'd taken — a fuckin' *lot*. Were they expired? No, they weren't. I'm not an idiot. All that — all that *shit*, for what? Nothing. Nothing but trouble. I was so out of my head about it. It wasn't about you. You know that. I think you know that. It was — sometimes I look back and there's so much noise and so

EMERY

much dust, I can't even make out the path
from beginning to now. I can't see
anything forward. All I feel
is the heat, then the cold, then heat,
then the cold. There's nothing else. I don't
think there's much more for us all, you know.
I think we should quit while we're still
ahead. *(Pause.)* You remember seeing
Jordan cough up blood? Drowning
on the inside of her lungs. I don't
want to see anyone drown. Unless
we're all together in the flood. Together.
I don't want to see anyone choke.
I don't want my kid to see any of that,
either. What did you come here for, John?

JOHN. You never called.

EMERY. I know.

JOHN. You were the only
thing there for me.

EMERY. Are you mad?

JOHN. I don't know
how not to be, Emery.

She looks at him. Silence.

EMERY. Well. How about
you just try to enjoy the sun right here?
There's still some flowers blooming there, you see?

JOHN. I see them.

EMERY. It's a gift, you know that?
A hundred twelve degrees on Christmas Eve.
That's some kind of gift.

END OF PLAY.