

EZRA HERTZ RETURNS

**a play in one act
by Tom Baum**

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Logan, mid 30s, a writer-in-residence

Sara, mid 30s, Logan's wife, a professor of psychology and psychotherapist

Ezra Hertz, mid 30s, their childhood friend

The living room of Logan and Sara's house. Present day.

(The living room and foyer of a one-story house, modestly furnished. A couch, two chairs, coffee table, telephone table, fireplace. Books line two walls. French doors open onto a moonlit patio. A swinging door leads to an unseen kitchen. On the foyer wall is a burglar-alarm panel.)

LOGAN *is alone in the living room. He's wearing an apron and talking on a cell.)*

LOGAN: *(uneasily)* —OK, I know what you did, you missed the dogleg right. Which way are you facing, north or south?...Right side of the street or left?...All right, got it, you're really close. Go left a block, turn left, go about half a mile....*(hushed)* No, I haven't told her you were coming...Why, because who knew if you'd actually make it.

(LOGAN quickly pockets his phone as SARA enters from the kitchen. She's wearing a matching apron.)

SARA: So you have a choice. Piccata, Tijuana, or Francese.

LOGAN: I'm sorry, what?

SARA: How would you like your chicken?

LOGAN: Whatever. You choose.

SARA: How's your tummy?

LOGAN: My tummy?

SARA: You said you were having symptoms. That would rule out Tijuana.

LOGAN: Yeah, OK. It's up to you.

SARA: Logan.

LOGAN: What?

SARA: When are you going to snap out of this?

LOGAN: Out of what?

SARA: This funk you've been in the past, I don't know, weeks...months...It's so frustrating.

LOGAN: Frustrating how?

SARA: You don't realize you've been depressed?

LOGAN: No. I mean, I haven't felt that different.

SARA: Did you work today?

LOGAN: I didn't have the juice.

SARA: What's the problem? Do you want to talk about it?

LOGAN: No. The ending. The whole thing. I think maybe it needs an overhaul.

SARA: No. Come on. How many times did you say that about *Full Disclosure*? Seriously. This can't continue. I come home from seeing clients, I don't need another client. I need someone who'll talk to me.

LOGAN: Yeah, I'm sorry.

SARA: Something's gotta change.

LOGAN: I agree. You're right. Maybe it will. How much food do we have.

SARA: Why, who did you invite?

LOGAN: I didn't exactly invite him.

SARA: Who?

LOGAN: He kinda invited himself.

SARA: Logan, who's coming?

LOGAN: (*pause*) Who's the last person you expected to see?

SARA: I don't know, who?

LOGAN: Or wanted to see. Or maybe I shouldn't speak for you. There was a time you wanted to see him every day.

SARA: Ohmigod.

LOGAN: That's right.

SARA: Ezra?

LOGAN: Yep. Ezra.

SARA: Well of course I'd love to see him.

LOGAN: OK. I wasn't sure.

SARA: Why didn't you tell me earlier?

LOGAN: I didn't know he was coming.

SARA: What do you mean, you didn't know? He didn't email? He just called you out of the blue? Where is he coming from?

LOGAN: I don't know. He didn't say.

SARA: Where has he been? What has he been doing?

LOGAN: He didn't tell me. He was pretty close-mouthed. "Hi, I'm coming to see you." That was about it.

SARA: Did he say anything about the novel?

LOGAN: No. Not a word. I mean I assume he's read it. Why wouldn't he. So are you up for this?

SARA: Why do you keep asking me that?

LOGAN: Nothing. No reason. Just making sure. He should be here by now, maybe he forgot the house number. I'll go wave down the car.

(LOGAN exits hastily. SARA heads for the kitchen. A knock on the patio door startles her.)

SARA: Ohmigod.

(EZRA opens the patio doors and enters. A carryon bag is slung over his shoulder.)

SARA: Ezra. Whoa. You scared me to death.

EZRA: Sorry, sweetheart. Didn't mean to.

SARA: You're here.

EZRA: Here I am.

SARA: This is so weird.

EZRA: Didn't Logan tell you I was coming?

SARA: Not till a minute ago.

EZRA: Happy to see me, Sara?

SARA: Of course I'm happy. We've missed you.

EZRA: We.

SARA: Both of us. Logan went out to look for you, you didn't see him?

EZRA: I went up the wrong alley. I would've been here earlier, but there was some kind of scare at the airport.

SARA: You flew in?

EZRA: No, I just like hanging out at airports. Sara, you need to take a breath? You're looking kinda freaked.

SARA: It's so strange to see you again.

EZRA: For me too, sweetheart. For me too.

(EZRA ditches his carryon on the couch. EZRA and SARA move toward each other, hug tentatively.)

SARA: So where'd you fly in from?

EZRA: Orlando. You look great, by the way. Teaching agrees with you.

SARA: You Googled us?

EZRA: Just you. How many clients do you have?

SARA: Full schedule.

EZRA: Students? Teachers?

SARA: Students, mostly.

EZRA: You keep them from jumping off of bridges.

SARA: I do what I can. So when did you get in? Right, you just said that. Can I get you a drink?

EZRA: A drink would be great. Our usual.

SARA: Jameson, no ice?

EZRA: That's my girl.

SARA: You know...you could've given me a heads-up. My phone's the same.

EZRA: Thought I'd leave that up to Logan. (*lightly*) Didn't want to talk behind his back. Which way is the loo?

SARA: Through that door and take a left.

EZRA: Feel my heart, it's pounding.

(EZRA *seizes* SARA's hand, places it on his heart. The front door opens. LOGAN enters.)

LOGAN: Typical Ezra, he must have got lost again—(*sees him*) Oh. You're here.

EZRA: Hey there, stranger.

SARA: He came in the back way.

LOGAN: It's you.

EZRA: In the flesh. Not on the page. Look at that, His and Her aprons. Sara, my drink?

SARA: Logan, do you want something?

LOGAN: Yeah. My usual.

EZRA: Make that three Jamesons.

SARA: Right away. No catching up until I'm back.

(SARA exits into the kitchen.)

LOGAN: Sorry about the directions.

EZRA: No worries. I got to tour the neighborhood. Some butt-ugly houses out there. A college town, you expect some restraint, not all this post-modern bullshit. But this place, it's nice, a nice little paradise. What's your mortgage like?

LOGAN: We don't own. We rent from the college.

EZRA: They don't care you're not married? You're not, are you? You woulda told me.

LOGAN: No, we're not married. I mean, we bicker like we're married, but no, not yet.

EZRA: Not yet. OK. By the way, the answer's yes.

LOGAN: The answer to what?

EZRA: I did read your novel. Cover to cover. My copy got a little dented...from throwing it across the room.

(SARA enters with the drinks.)

EZRA: *(to SARA)* I vote for Tijuana. *(to LOGAN)* In honor of our Mexican summer. Never mind your indigestion.

SARA: *(to LOGAN)* You told him our menu?

LOGAN: No. Oh. Wow. I left my phone on.

EZRA: *(taking drink)* He left his phone on. To happy reunions. To lucky white men everywhere. I can't believe it: a one-book wonder and they make you a professor.

LOGAN: I'm only an adjunct. Sara's the one on tenure track.

EZRA: Hey, more power to you. Of course, now you gotta worry about the Sophomore Slump.

SARA: Are you staying for dinner, Ezra?

EZRA: *(to LOGAN)* Well, I think that was the plan, wasn't it?

SARA: Was that the plan, Logan?

LOGAN: Um, yeah, that was the plan.

SARA: So tell me. How many times did you guys actually talk?

LOGAN: *(lying)* Just once.

EZRA: *(lying)* Yeah, just the one time.

LOGAN: Not counting the call just now.

SARA: You guys were always such terrible liars.

EZRA: Hey, don't blame Logan. He didn't want to get your hopes up.

SARA: Right. Excuse me, I hear my oil sizzling.

(SARA disappears into the kitchen. LOGAN knocks back his whiskey.)

EZRA: You should have prepared her better.

LOGAN: I didn't want to poke the ashes. On the chance you'd change your mind.

EZRA: Poke the ashes. I like that.

LOGAN: Thank you.

EZRA: You're improving. Metaphors used to be your weak suit. Of course I was gonna show up.

LOGAN: On the phone you didn't sound that sure.

EZRA: I know an SOS when I hear one. How's it going? You got an ending yet?

LOGAN: Ezra, shh, OK?

EZRA: Right, right. Sorry. Mum's the word.

(EZRA has gone to the bookshelf.)

EZRA: Anal as ever. Balzac...Bellow...Bowen...Brautigan...Here we go.

(EZRA *takes down a book.*)

EZRA: *Full Disclosure* by Logan Burch. Full disclosure? You wish. (*opens it, reads*) “Any resemblance to persons living or dead is unintentional, and none should be inferred.” I never saw a disclaimer that wasn’t total bullshit.

LOGAN: OK, I was afraid of this.

EZRA: You should be afraid.

LOGAN: Ezra, you’re the hero of the novel, OK?

EZRA: Some hero. I thieve, I sleep with whores, I date-rape “Serena,” aka Sara, I have a psychotic nervous breakdown, and at the end you save me from suicide.

(SARA *enters, with her own drink.*)

SARA: Chicken’s browning. (*re book*) I see you found the book.

EZRA: Yeah, I’m acquainted with the alphabet. (*to LOGAN*) I’ll say this for it. The sex scenes are pretty good. Especially the ones between “Ethan” and “Serena.” Didn’t you think so, Sara?

SARA: I think he did well by all of us.

EZRA: You mind a little criticism though?

LOGAN: The cows have left the barn, but sure.

EZRA: For the sequel. Sara, you ever see “Japanese War Bride”?

SARA: No, what’s that?

LOGAN: Fifties movie.

EZRA: Used to be one of Logan’s favorites. I bet he never told you this.

SARA: I never heard of it.

EZRA: Figures. I mean, we all knew he was a dork, but this was beyond the pale. Check it out: this white guy comes back from World War II, OK? With a Japanese bride. Now there's a Japanese farmhand living next door.

LOGAN: Not living next door. He works on the farm.

EZRA: Whatever.

LOGAN: *(to SARA, impatiently)* The bride and the farmhand, they bond, they take long walks together. She gets pregnant, and when the baby's born, it looks very Japanese.

EZRA: Big scandal. Now according to Logan, that didn't prove the girl and the farmhand had sex.

LOGAN: I was 10 years old, OK?

EZRA: Ten? You were 13. A guy could transmit his racial genetics just by hanging around the girl. No sperm necessary. You didn't have to fuck to have a baby.

LOGAN: I never said that.

EZRA: Tantric Sex. Tantric Conception.

LOGAN: It had nothing to do with fucking. It was a paranormal theory.

EZRA: So why did you leave it out of the book?

LOGAN: Some things you leave out.

EZRA: Remember how long it took him to close the deal with you?

SARA: Longer than it took you.

EZRA: I bet he's still pretty Tantric.

SARA: Lately, yes.

LOGAN: OK. Time out. You're angry about the novel, I'm sorry, I didn't know how to warn you, we didn't know how to reach you.

SARA: Yes, so where have you been, Ezra? What have you been doing all these years?

EZRA: Remember our old rule, the best jobs are where nobody judges you? We were all going to find a job like that and live happily ever after?

SARA: We took a blood oath. We were so stoned.

EZRA: You guys, forget it, student evaluations, literary critics, you're totally at their mercy. Same with a horseplayer, it turns out. You think you're on your own, figuring the odds, nobody judging your performance, but no. You have to cozy up to the trainers and the stewards, and if they don't like you, you're fucked. I dealt blackjack for a while, same problem. You're working for tips, like a waiter. But I finally wised up. This may come as a shock: I was the gorilla for the Phoenix Suns.

LOGAN: I thought I recognized you in there.

EZRA: (*startled*) You did?

LOGAN: (*startled*) No. Of course not.

EZRA: You were trying to be witty.

LOGAN: Yeah. Go on.

EZRA: Mascot, that's a judgment-free gig.

LOGAN: Yeah, I see that.

EZRA: If the fans boo, it's not you they're booing. It's like a bulletproof vest for your ego.

LOGAN: So why aren't you still in Phoenix?

EZRA: Because I moved to Florida. Started working for the tabs. They don't care what you write, so long as you can crank it out fast. You probably read some of my articles.

LOGAN: Maybe at the checkout counter.

EZRA: (*to SARA*) Too snobby to buy a tabloid. (*to LOGAN*) You want Brad Pitt to read your stuff, you gotta write for the *Star*. Only paper he reads. (*off LOGAN'S look*) So how's the sequel coming?

SARA: How do you know there's a sequel?

EZRA: (*oops*) I just assumed.

LOGAN: (*covering*) It's not a sequel.

SARA: He's writing a play.

EZRA: We're all in it again?

SARA: Your guess is as good as mine. (*wryly*) Or maybe better.

EZRA: Well, don't invite Morty to the opening.

SARA: Your dad read the novel?

EZRA: Freaked him out. He was like, "Is this true? You're a *fageleh*?" I go, "Morty—we were little kids." He's like, "What the fuck difference does that make." I couldn't resist. "Morty, we thought you didn't give a shit. Those times we watched Monday Night Football—we were holding hands behind your back." (*to SARA*) He asks about you all the time.

SARA: I always loved your dad.

EZRA: "How could you lose that beautiful, brilliant woman to that dork? I'm like, "Morty—you were a Communist. To each according to his needs."

LOGAN: OK, you know what? You've proved you remember how to fuck with me. Now give it a rest.

EZRA: (*to SARA*) Remember that day you dumped him? He makes me drive him to Lake Hopatcong. He starts swimming out way beyond his depth, more and more exhausted and thank God I was there to drag him back to shore. I save Logan from killing himself, and in the book I'm the suicide?

LOGAN: Some suicide attempt. I brought a towel.

EZRA: You were freaked out for months. The whole year I was dating her. Sara, sweetheart, could I have two fingers more?—don't get up, just point me in the right direction. (*to LOGAN*) You borrowed my life like you were borrowing my truck. And then you totaled it.

(EZRA goes into the kitchen. After a moment he begins to sing—Clem Snide's "Let's Explode.")

EZRA: (*singing, off*) "I don't want to know me better...I don't want to know me better..."

LOGAN: I'm sorry.

SARA: Sorry about what?

LOGAN: I shouldn't have let him come.

SARA: Why not? Come on. It's Ezra.

LOGAN: He's all over the lot.

SARA: He's jealous.

LOGAN: Of what?

SARA: You're published.

LOGAN: So is he, apparently. "Only paper Brad Pitt reads"?

SARA: He was joking.

LOGAN: He was serious. He was always a little grandiose. Now he's fucking paranoid.

SARA: Logan...I think you're being a little irrational.

EZRA: (*off*) Sara, you might want to take a look at this—

(*EZRA comes back in with his drink, and the bottle of Jameson.*)

EZRA: —I just lowered the heat on your chicken. Half the pieces are burned to shit.

SARA: Ohmigod.

(*SARA makes a beeline for the kitchen. EZRA's cell rings. EZRA checks the incoming number. Stares at it. Doesn't answer.*)

LOGAN: Something wrong?

EZRA: Nah. Just some people I don't want to talk to.

(*EZRA pockets his phone, refills his drink. SARA re-enters from the kitchen.*)

SARA: The chicken's totally ruined. I think we should all go out.

EZRA: Aw, I don't think we want to do that, do we?

LOGAN: Are you sure it's not salvageable? Let me take a look.

(LOGAN *exits into the kitchen.*)

EZRA: I'm making him nervous, aren't I.

SARA: You always liked to mess with his head. He's not used to it.

EZRA: Took you a while.

SARA: You were always pretty straight-up with me.

EZRA: Remember what you wrote in the yearbook?

SARA: Remind me.

EZRA: "You were my first love..."

SARA: "...and I'll never forget you." Yes, I remember.

EZRA: And you were my first love.

SARA: Sometimes I wonder.

EZRA: Does that mean what I think it means? Hey. Sara. Me and Logan, we never held hands. No homo, OK? That was in the book. Not in life. He made all that up. To slander me.

SARA: Ezra, that does sound paranoid. He worshipped you.

EZRA: Yeah, we'll see. Tell me, are you exclusive, the two of you?

SARA: Yes, we've been exclusive.

EZRA: Up till when?

SARA: Up till...whenever.

EZRA: Up till now? Where are you going?

SARA: To help in the kitchen. Try and lay off him, all right? For my sake?

(SARA *exits...and immediately re-enters, a stunned look on her face, carrying LOGAN's apron.*)

EZRA: What's the matter?

SARA: He must have gone to the store. For more chicken.

EZRA: Same M.O.

SARA: What do you mean, same M.O.?

EZRA: He likes us being together.

SARA: In what sense?

EZRA: In the sense he always did. OK, you want me to be specific. Whenever me and you went out—I'd get a phone call afterwards from Logan.

SARA: Every time?

EZRA: That whole year. Without fail.

SARA: And what would you talk about?

EZRA: What else? The horny details. He never told you this? Of course not. He left that out of the book too.

SARA: You tortured him.

EZRA: Hey, I could have told him nothing. That would have been sadistic.

SARA: Ezra, tell me the truth. Who actually got in touch with who?

EZRA: He did. I gave you both up for lost. He saw my byline in the *Star* and he called the newspaper.

SARA: Did he say exactly why?

EZRA: He didn't have to. He needs crazy in his life. We know that.

SARA: OK. Fine. You're here. If you can get him out of his funk, if you can get him to finish the play, that's fine.

EZRA: Otherwise, he'll never make it to L.A.

SARA: L.A.?

EZRA: Don't tell him I said anything, OK?

SARA: What's L.A. got to do with anything?

(The land line rings. SARA picks up.)

SARA: *(on phone)* Logan, where the fuck are you?...We had chicken in the freezer, why did you leave us here alone without telling us?....You know there was extra chicken, you wrapped it yourself....Well, hurry back, we've got things to iron out.

(SARA hangs up. EZRA has wandered over to the CDs and is putting one in the stereo.)

EZRA: We still have the same tastes. I know exactly which of these are yours.

(A song plays—"Nightmares," by the Violent Femmes.)

SARA: When was he planning to go to L.A.?

EZRA: As soon as he finishes the play. That's gonna be his calling card. He didn't mention that to you?

SARA: No. Nothing. I haven't been able to get a word out of him for weeks.

EZRA: *Déjà vu.*

SARA: He's totally regressed.

EZRA: Poor Sara.

SARA: It's so fucking frustrating!

(EZRA places his hands on SARA's shoulders. SARA yields to an old sensation.)

SARA: Ezra, no.

(EZRA kisses her.)

SARA: *(feebly)* Ezra, stop.

(EZRA doesn't stop. Kisses her again. SARA sways with him to the music, then squirms out of EZRA'S embrace.)

SARA: I've had too much to drink.

EZRA: Maybe you should let him go.

SARA: How can I do that?

EZRA: Then ease up on the leash. The way things are trending, one of these days, Logan's gonna go down to the store for boneless and never come back.

SARA: Do you really think I have him on a leash?

EZRA: He does. That's the key thing. *(pause)* I'd return him in good condition. Better than ever.

SARA: You're kidding.

EZRA: If that'll make you happy.

SARA: I thought it was me you wanted, Ezra.

EZRA: There's nothing I want more.

(EZRA kisses her again. SARA breaks free.)

SARA: No. I can't. Stop it.

(EZRA'S cell rings. EZRA checks the incoming number.)

EZRA: Jesus, of all times. Why don't they leave me the fuck alone?

SARA: Who?

EZRA: Forget it.

SARA: No, who's calling you?

EZRA: It's not your problem. It's my problem.

(EZRA goes to the patio door, looks out warily. LOGAN enters with a grocery bag, sets it down, puts on the apron.)

LOGAN: So what did I miss? What do we need to iron out?

SARA: Where do I begin?

EZRA: Sarah, I'll handle this.

LOGAN: Handle what? Why is the stereo on? What have you two been doing?

EZRA: Talking, mostly. She wanted to know about the gay stuff.

LOGAN: What gay stuff?

SARA: The post-coital phone calls. And your Hollywood plans.

LOGAN: Oh fuck.

EZRA: She wormed it out of me, dude.

LOGAN: There aren't any plans. I was thinking...you know...maybe when you take your sabbatical.

SARA: That's not for three years.

LOGAN: I didn't do the math, OK? I thought we were free to leave after this semester.

SARA: Right, and bail on all my clients.

LOGAN: The kids go home for the summer. In the fall, they get a new therapist.

SARA: You're kidding, right?

LOGAN: Yeah, OK, I don't mean to be cavalier.

SARA: You're not being cavalier. You're being ridiculous. This is crazy! You don't have a Hollywood agent, you're not going to get assignments off one novel that was published five years ago.

LOGAN: Thanks for your support.

SARA: Thanks for keeping me in the loop. I'll get dinner started.

(SARA takes the grocery bag and exits. LOGAN pours himself another drink.)

LOGAN: Why the fuck did you tell her about L.A.?

EZRA: (*preoccupied; studying his cell*) Is it true, they call your cell from two different numbers, they can tell your location?

LOGAN: Why? Who wants to know where you are?

EZRA: Just some people looking for me.

LOGAN: What other crap have you been telling her? Any gay stuff, it was all on your side.

(SARA has entered.)

LOGAN: Were you two dancing?

EZRA: What gay stuff on my side?

LOGAN: OK. (*to SARA*) Did he happen to tell you how he whipped his dick out in my basement? Yeah, he did that. Unzipped and took it out and held it there for me to see. Like some fucking ape ritual.

EZRA: And what did you do?

LOGAN: What did I do—what could I do?—

EZRA: You stared at it, man. You turned all shades of red. And then you took out yours. You and me, both with our dicks out. Pissing in that basement toilet.

LOGAN: There was no toilet in our basement. (*to SARA*) You were down there a hundred times, you know there isn't, right?

SARA: Logan, honestly I don't remember.

EZRA: We're crossing swords, and I'm like, "Who are you thinking of?" You go, "Sara," and I go, "Two minds with but a single thought." Remember what you said? "Two minds with but a single thought? That's a waste of mental energy." Typical Logan. We're talking about sex and he's making dorky jokes.

LOGAN: Yeah, should I tell her about Tijuana? What really happened there?

EZRA: What about Tijuana?

LOGAN: How you couldn't get it up? (*to SARA*) The cab driver takes us to this crappy whorehouse, up a flight of rickety stairs, all these fat Fellini whores waiting to bang us, he takes one look and bolts for the taco stand. At least I went through with it.

EZRA: Bullshit. You're the one who couldn't get hard.

SARA: All right, that's enough. Work this out and leave me out of it.

EZRA: Sara, come on. You're a therapist. You hear this stuff every day.

SARA: Not from my ex-lover.

EZRA: Meaning me? Or meaning him? (*to LOGAN*) You don't remember your hooker? With the Jesus tattoo? You couldn't get hard, she told you to go buy a banana, you threw down ten bucks and vaulted down the stairs. No? I'm making this up? And then he has the nerve to compare me to a banana.

LOGAN: When did I ever do that.

EZRA: (*to SARA*): "Hard on the surface, inside he's mush." Page 146.

LOGAN: You deny you ran away?

EZRA: I do deny it. I went back to that whorehouse three times.

LOGAN: In your dreams. I kept a close watch on the door and you never came out. The next time I saw you, you had salsa all over your face.

(EZRA's *cell rings again*.)

EZRA: Oh shit.

LOGAN: What's the matter?

EZRA: It's the second number.

SARA: What do you mean, the second number?

LOGAN: Ezra, who do you think is trying to find you?

EZRA: (*starts out*) Who do I think is trying to find me? Is that what you said?

LOGAN: Where are you going?

EZRA: I gotta deal with this. (*into cell*) Yeah, it's me. Stop calling, I'm not coming back. I had enough of you guys to last me a lifetime....

(EZRA *exits onto the patio.*)

LOGAN: Who the hell is he talking to?

SARA: Better question: Why did you deliberately leave us alone?

LOGAN: Is that what he told you?

SARA: He said it was your M.O.

LOGAN: What M.O.? When? What are you talking about?

SARA: After every date I had with Ezra you called him up for details.

LOGAN: I called him?

SARA: That's what he claims

LOGAN: He was the one who called me. To brag.

SARA: Did you hang up on him?

LOGAN: Yeah, I hung up.

SARA: Every call?

LOGAN: Why were you two dancing?

SARA: I asked you a question.

LOGAN: No, I didn't hang up every time.

SARA: Sounds masochistic to me.

LOGAN: So it was masochistic. We were teenagers.

SARA: Why would he lie about it?

LOGAN: He's not lying. He believes everything he says. He thinks people are triangulating his location with cell phone calls. What? What was that look? Sara, there was no gay relationship. We horsed around. We wrestled. The usual kid stuff.

SARA: Why are you lying to me?

LOGAN: I'm not. Not about that.

SARA: He said you were the one who got in touch.

LOGAN: OK. That part is true. I saw his name in the *Star* and I looked him up. I'm sorry now I did. Were you two making out?

SARA: Isn't that what you wanted?

LOGAN: No! Oh Jesus.

SARA: Well, we weren't.

LOGAN: But you were dancing.

SARA: We were dancing, he tried to kiss me, and I didn't let him, OK?

LOGAN: I'll kill him.

(LOGAN reaches for Ezra's carryon bag, starts rummaging through.)

SARA: What are you doing?

LOGAN: Looking for a weapon.

SARA: Logan, ohmigod, will you calm down?

LOGAN: He used to carry a Bowie knife.

SARA: They wouldn't let him on the plane.

LOGAN: How do you know he was on a plane? If he was on a plane, how come there's no security tag on his carryon?

(LOGAN takes a copy of his novel out of the bag, opens it.)

LOGAN: Aha. See? My novel.

SARA: He said he had a copy.

LOGAN: Yeah, so take a look.

SARA: (*looks*) Oh wow.

LOGAN: Believe me now? Scribbles on every page. Very tiny writing. That's classic crazy, right? Oh, and look here.

(LOGAN *unearths two pill vials. Checks the labels.*)

LOGAN: Topomax. What the hell is that?

SARA: It's an anticonvulsant.

LOGAN: What does that mean, he's epileptic?

SARA: It's used for treating manic episodes.

LOGAN: Depakote?

SARA: Mood stabilizer.

LOGAN: They're both empty.

SARA: Let me see those. (*examining label*) OK. Danville.

LOGAN: What's Danville?

SARA: It's a state mental hospital in Pennsylvania. That's who's trying to reach him.

LOGAN: Remind me, what's the SOS code? For the alarm system.

SARA: Logan, let's try not to panic.

LOGAN: You've dealt with psychos. How do you talk them down?

SARA: If they're cycling manic, you flatter them. Make them feel super-important.

LOGAN: Ezra always feels important.

SARA: Yeah, just don't fight him. Don't question his delusions. It'll just upset him.

(LOGAN *heads out.*)

SARA: Where are you going? Logan, for God's sake, you're not leaving me alone with him again.

LOGAN: I need the burglar alarm manual.

SARA: In my file drawer. Under "Keepers."

(LOGAN *exits.* EZRA *enters.* SARA *hastily drops the pill vials back in the carryon.*)

EZRA: What are you doing? Where's Logan? Whoa, have you guys been snooping in my bag? Sara, that's my private copy.

(EZRA *picks up the book.*)

EZRA: You know what I should do, is burn this. Wouldn't that be trippy. I set fire to this book and every copy in the world goes up in flames.

(LOGAN *comes bustling back in, burglar alarm manual in hand.*)

LOGAN: I can't make head or tail of this—

EZRA: Can't make head or tail of what?

(EZRA *grabs the manual.*)

EZRA: Burglar alarm? You're too late, I'm already here.
(*tosses manual aside*) Sorry to bust you like this, sweetheart, but Logan, just so you know—I hit on Sara while you were out of the room—

LOGAN: She told me.

EZRA: Just like you asked me to. And she didn't resist. If I was in your shoes, I'd go to L.A. tomorrow.

LOGAN: Ezra, where did you fly in from today?

EZRA: Or maybe we should all go together.

SARA: Ezra, how long have you been off your meds?

EZRA: About an hour.

LOGAN: Seriously, how long?

EZRA: See, that's the trouble with liars. They don't believe anything you tell them.

SARA: Who's your doctor?

EZRA: Nobody. Morty Hertz won't spring for a doctor.

SARA: Is that where you've been living? Will your dad be wondering where you are?

EZRA: I didn't kill him, if that's what you're planning to put in the play.

(EZRA's cell rings. EZRA checks the number. LOGAN picks up the manual, starts leafing through again.)

EZRA: *(re his cell)* Here we go. Getting closer.

(EZRA grabs the poker, goes to the patio door, looks out.)

LOGAN: *(sotto, to SARA)* It's a crucifix.

SARA: What's a crucifix?

LOGAN: The code. 4-5-6-2-5-8-0.

EZRA: Fuck you guys talking about? Where are you going, Sara? What are you doing? Hey. Don't.

(SARA is entering the SOS code on the burglar alarm panel. The alarm goes off.)

EZRA: Oh Sara. I asked you not to do that.

(The land line rings. EZRA snatches up the phone.)

EZRA: *(to LOGAN)* What's the password?

(LOGAN doesn't answer. EZRA brandishes the poker at LOGAN.)

EZRA: Tell me the password or I'll bash your fucking head in!

SARA: It's Africa!

EZRA: Africa. You guys are such racists. (*into phone*) This is Logan, the password's Africa....Yeah, everything's OK. Set it off by mistake. (*hangs up*) Shmucks. How many home invasions have these rent-a-cops prevented? None. Zero. You guys are hopeless!

(EZRA *paces, waving the poker menacingly.*)

SARA: Ezra, please calm down. If you need medication, I can call some people.

EZRA: Don't need it. Stuff rots out my liver.

SARA: How long were you in Danville?

EZRA: Couple of weeks. So what. Put it in the play. I give you permission.

SARA: The point is, they're not coming for you. Even if they wanted to. They can't cross state lines. All they want to do is help. We want to help you too.

LOGAN: We love you, Ezra.

EZRA: Bullshit you love me!

(EZRA *advances with the poker.*)

LOGAN: Ezra, whoa, don't.

EZRA: That's why you wrote all those vile things about me.

LOGAN: I'm sorry if you thought they were vile.

SARA: (*prompting* LOGAN): He didn't just think it. They were vile.

LOGAN: Yes. Absolutely. Totally vile.

EZRA: Thief? Drug addict? Date rapist?

SARA: He's sorry.

EZRA: (*brandishing poker*) Say that like you mean it.

LOGAN: I'm sorry for all the lies.

EZRA: You saw me come out of that whorehouse in Tijuana.

LOGAN: Clear as day.

EZRA: They loved me, those whores.

LOGAN: They were all waving goodbye.

EZRA: What, you think that's funny?

LOGAN: No. I was just remembering.

EZRA: I get Christmas cards from those hookers.

LOGAN: I'm sure you do.

EZRA: You're nothing without me. You're a pea-brain compared to me.

LOGAN: I can't hold a candle to you, Ezra. Never could.

EZRA: Right, Sara? I was certainly the better lover.

LOGAN: No question about it.

SARA: No question.

EZRA: You're not just blowing smoke? Sara didn't coach you to kiss my ass?

LOGAN: Of course not. Every girl said you were a stud. They were all in love with Ezra Hertz.

EZRA: Those were great times...my glory days....

LOGAN: Your whole life has been glorious, Ezra.

EZRA: You remember my first kiss with Sara? *(pause)* Logan? You know you do.

LOGAN: *(uneasily)* Yeah, I remember.

EZRA: You remember where I was?

LOGAN: On the sofa in my basement.

(SARA takes off the apron.)

EZRA: You know, that night, I almost didn't make a move? I was sitting there, suddenly my brain froze. Couldn't get my mouth to work. Remember where you were?

LOGAN: Was I looking in the window?

EZRA: No! Think back!

LOGAN: I was hiding in the furnace room.

EZRA: With the door ajar.

(SARAH starts to edge away, watching.)

EZRA: You remember what she said to me?

LOGAN: "I'm sorry you're so bored."

EZRA: No! Not "bored"!

LOGAN: Right. No. What did she say?

EZRA: "I'm sorry you're having such a bad time."

LOGAN: Yeah. And then you kissed her.

EZRA: She took the burden on herself. What other girl would do that.

LOGAN: She's one in a million.

EZRA: Made me feel so strong.

LOGAN: I know what you mean. She was good for both of us.

EZRA: You missed me, didn't you, pal?

LOGAN: Well sure, you know I did.

EZRA: All that time I was in Nevada, I wanted to call you. But then I read that novel, and I was afraid to. Afraid of my own strength. What it might lead me to do.

LOGAN: I should never have written it.

EZRA: Apology accepted.

LOGAN: Why don't we put that poker away.

EZRA: Oh, you think you talked me down, huh?

(EZRA feints with the poker. LOGAN backs away, frightened. EZRA laughs, hands over the poker. SARA now starts out the door. Stops as LOGAN raises the poker.)

SARA: Logan, no!

EZRA: Go ahead. You know you want to break my skull. Do it.

(LOGAN lowers the poker.)

LOGAN: I would never do that.

(LOGAN puts the poker aside. SARA eases quietly out the door.)

EZRA: No guts.

LOGAN: And neither would you.

EZRA: Yeah, so why make me the villain?

LOGAN: I was thinking like a dork. I built you up to tear you down.

EZRA: Just tell it like it happens. That's the rule. No lies, no exaggerations.

LOGAN: From now on.

EZRA: You promise?

LOGAN: I promise.

EZRA: Let reality be your guide.

(LOGAN's cell rings.)

EZRA: Shit. There they are again.

LOGAN: No, hey, it's my phone. Nobody's triangulating. You're here, you're free, we'll get you some meds, you'll feel better in the morning. Get it? You don't have enemies. You're with friends.

(LOGAN looks at his cell, stiffens.)

EZRA: What's the matter, pal? Who is it? It's not Danville calling, is it?

LOGAN: It's Sara.

EZRA: Sara?

LOGAN: *(reads)* GOODBYE. LUV TO U BOTH.

(LOGAN goes to the front door, opens it.)

LOGAN: Sara?!

(EZRA picks up the apron, puts it on.)

EZRA: OK. Now you know how your play ends. I'll get the chicken started. If you have lemons, I vote for Francese.

LOGAN: *(calling out)* SARA!

(No answer. Stunned, LOGAN closes the door.)

EZRA: How about lettuce? Did you buy lettuce?

LOGAN: *(dazed)* Yes, I bought lettuce.

EZRA: Wait'll you taste my dressing. You got white wine vinegar?

LOGAN: I'll have to check.

EZRA: Basil? Dry mustard? Nutmeg?

LOGAN: Yeah, I have those.

EZRA: This dancer in Vegas, she gave me the recipe. Did I mention I was a personal chef to Jay-Z? I worked on his yacht for a year. We had great times in Miami. You've heard of the Lost City of Atlantis? Well, get a load of this: It's right there in Florida. It's not underwater. The seas receded and left this whole series of earthworks. I found them. I discovered the Lost City. I wrote it up for *The Star*. You want a Hollywood career, that's who you should be writing for. Only paper Brad Pitt reads!

(EZRA exits into the kitchen. LOGAN sinks into a chair. A puzzled smile creeps onto his face. Slow fade to black. END OF PLAY.)