

*A year and a half later. Summer. Evening. There are a few improvements/upgrades to the apartment/her stuff, and a dry cleaning bag with a couple men's shirts hang on the door to the bedroom or on a coat rack by the door. A FedEx package with a manuscript in it is on the coffee table. Olivia enters her apartment. Ethan walks in behind her, a nervous, cheery energy between them.*

Ethan: I buzzed but you weren't here —

Olivia: How long were you waiting?

Ethan: Not that long.

Olivia: Why didn't you just call?

Ethan: I was in the neighborhood.

Olivia: I didn't know you were in town. The twitterverse usually announces your visits.

Ethan: I came back to find an apartment.

Olivia: You're moving back?

Ethan: Yeah. I thought about New York. But I just want to come home. LA sucked.

Olivia: Can I get you anything?

Ethan: No, I'm good.

Olivia: So, the movie did all right.

Ethan: All right enough to not be a liability, I hope. But not all right in any other way, really.

Olivia: I didn't see it.

Ethan: I'm glad you didn't.

Olivia: That bad?

Ethan: Worse than you can imagine, I think. *(A beat)* You look great.

Olivia: Thanks. You, too. I had the big birthday.

Ethan: Yeah, I know. I almost sent you something.

Olivia: You did?

Ethan: Yeah, but, I thought it would be weird.

Olivia: *(After a moment)* I kept waiting for you to write something about me. But you never did.

Ethan: No. I figured I owed you that. (*After a moment.*) So, you're doing great. Your book's done so well.

Olivia: It's no *Sex with Strangers* but yeah. It also just got optioned for a movie, if you can believe it.

Ethan: Really? That's great.

Olivia: Some twenty-two year-old starlet's company. They'll probably never make it... (*Olivia's phone buzzes. She looks at it. She puts down the phone.*) But still...

Ethan: I'm so relieved that it all turned out all right.

Olivia: I bet. I kept thinking that if it didn't happen like it did — all the press about it, all the details of you and me, me being E. S. Thorn — it was *exactly* what I didn't want to happen, attention for all the wrong reasons. It was awful.

Ethan: Yeah.

Olivia: (*With a smile*) But it really did help sell the book. It helped a lot.

Ethan: It did.

Olivia: I've often wondered if that's why you did it — you knew the shit-storm from the scandal would do more for me than anything the marketing department at FSG ever could.

Ethan: Thanks for *thinking* that.

Olivia: It made me hate you less. Sometimes.

Ethan: I'm glad. And thanks for not suing me.

Olivia: My lawyer will never get over it. But I figured I owed you that.

Ethan: I don't know that you did.

Olivia: (*After a moment*) I got the copy you made for me.

Ethan: I didn't make // you a copy—

Olivia: Susan told me it was you.

Ethan: Oh. She wasn't supposed to.

Olivia: She hates you, too, you know.

Ethan: Oh, I know. I lost Susan, you and most of the writers on my app — all in a week. It was brutal.

Olivia: Yeah. (*After a moment*) But, you were right.

Ethan: Yeah?

Olivia: I was really sad I couldn't hold my book in my hands, couldn't put it on a shelf. I'm happy to have it.

Ethan: Good. (*After a moment*) Ahmit said you're getting married.

Olivia: Oh, uh, no. He's a good guy, a teacher. He just moved in. But we're talking about it, getting married...

Ethan: That's great.

Olivia: Soon, probably. We want to have a kid and time is...you know.

Ethan: You never told me that.

Olivia: Why would I? So you could run away screaming? I knew that wasn't anything you were interested in.

Ethan: (*flatly, his meaning unclear.*) Right. (*Ethan picks up the open FedEx envelope off the coffee table and removes the manuscript.*) So, you got it.

Olivia: Yeah. I did.

Ethan: (*after a moment.*) So...what do you think?

Olivia: It just got here a couple of days ago.

Ethan: You didn't read it?

Olivia: (*slowly*) No. I did.

Ethan: And...?

Olivia: (*slowly, getting emotional*) And. I think... I think it's really quite...brilliant.

Ethan: You do?

Olivia: I do. It's poetic and haunting and ... very moving.

Ethan: You sound a little shocked.

Olivia: I am.

Ethan: (*a knife in the ribs*) Oh.

Olivia: (*slowly, still emotional*) I'm sorry, but ... I didn't know you could do ... *that*.

Ethan: (*After a moment*) I haven't even given it to my new agent yet. It's so different from my other books, obviously. I'm going to put it out under a different name.

Olivia: Yeah?

Ethan: I can't put it out as Ethan Strange because those readers will buy it and hate me for writing it. And the people who would like it won't buy it with that name on it...

Olivia: Any ideas?

Ethan: Not yet. I've googled about a thousand names, but nothing I like comes back without all kinds of *stuff* attached.

Olivia: How about Cat Lunt?

Ethan: (*Smiling*) I bet that's still available. I'm thinking I'll just go with plain old Ethan Kane. (*After a moment*) If I didn't meet you. Know you. I wouldn't have been able to. To write it.

Olivia: Well, I'm glad you finally did.

Ethan: (*After a moment*) How much of it, of our being together, was just about me do you think? Not what I made happen but just about... me?

Olivia: I don't know.

Ethan: Wow.

Olivia: No. A lot. A lot of it. (*After a moment.*) How much of it was just about me?

Ethan: A lot.

Olivia: Yeah

Ethan: (*after a moment*) Come to dinner with me.

Olivia: No. I can't.

Ethan: No funny business, I promise.

Olivia: Really, I can't.

Ethan: Just a drink, then.

Olivia: Why?

Ethan: I don't know. (*A beat*) It just seems so unfair.

Olivia: What?

Ethan: Your book made me love you. My book made you hate me.

Olivia: That's not...

Ethan: I know. (*A beat*) If only we could have met like two regular strangers. Sit at a bar. Talk. Get to know each other.

Olivia: It's too late. It's so too late.

Ethan: But what if we're actually supposed to be together?

Olivia: What does that mean?

Ethan: I don't know. (*Ethan slowly moves in on her*)

Olivia: Ethan ... (*he kisses her. She kisses him back, then stops herself.*) You should go. (*He walks to the door.*)

Ethan: That bar on the corner, I'm just going to go sit there, have a couple of drinks. So, if you want, I'll be there.

Olivia: (*With finality*) It was nice seeing you, Ethan.

Ethan: Yeah. You, too.

*Ethan exits, leaving the door open. Olivia looks after him. After a moment of consideration, she grabs her bag and walks towards the door. She stops in the doorway. She turns around and steps back into her apartment. She turns again and steps back into the doorway looking after Ethan. Lights.*

**End of Play**