

Light as a Feather

A one-act play

by

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CHARACTERS

SARA, 18.

DREW. Sara's ex. A ghost.

HAROLD, late 60s. Works at Dunkin'.

HAROLD, late 60s. Works at Tim Horton's. Has a Canadian accent.

SETTING

In a car. Across New York and Ontario.

TIME

Present day.

Lights up on a sedan. Sara sits behind the wheel, and Drew sits next to her in the passenger seat. The back of the car is stuffed with suitcases and bags.

How long is the drive?
DREW

About 8 hours.
SARA

If we're going to make it before it gets dark, we'd better get going.
DREW

If *I'm* going to make it. You're not coming.
SARA

Sure.
DREW

I don't want you to come.
SARA

Just start the damn car.
DREW

Beat. Sara starts the car and begins to drive.

So did you like pack your whole bedroom?
(Pause.)
You can't ignore me the whole way, Sara.
DREW (con't.)

Sara turns on music on her phone. The song *Treat You Better* by Shawn Mendes plays.

Real mature.
DREW (con't.)

Sara turns up the music.

Come on.
DREW (con't.)

I'm not going to listen to you. I'm running away.
SARA
(over the music)

To Canada. Who runs away to Canada?
DREW

Plenty of people. That's where Harriet Tubman went, right?
SARA

You're not a slave.
DREW

It's a land of opportunity.
SARA

You're *leaving* the land of opportunity. The *city* of opportunity.
DREW

Shut up.
(Beat.)
I need a new country.
SARA

I think a new county would have done.
DREW

You don't like Canada.
SARA

Exactly.
DREW

Exactly.
SARA

What the hell? This is about me?!
DREW

No! It's about me.
SARA

What does Toronto have that New York doesn't?
DREW

Canadians.
SARA

DREW
(laughs.)

Okay.

SARA

Did you even bring a passport?

DREW

No.

Pause. Drew glances into the backseat.

DREW
(con't.)

Did you bring your entire wardrobe?

SARA

I just brought what I needed.

Drew reaches back into the backseat and pulls a locket out of one of the bags.

DREW

My locket? Aww I thought—

SARA

Don't touch my stuff.

DREW

You wore this every day. For like three months. Does it still have our picture inside it?
(He opens it.)

Ah, I see.

SARA

I didn't want to see you anymore.

DREW

You didn't have to gouge out my eyes.

SARA

Yes, I did.

DREW

Why did you keep it?

SARA
So you would know how much I hate you.

DREW
Do you hate me?

SARA
More than I've ever hated anyone.

DREW
(sighs)
You're exhausting sometimes.

Drew leans his head against the window and falls asleep. An hour passes. A song by The Weeknd plays. Sara continues to drive.

SARA
(softly)
I need this, Drew. I need to start fresh. And you can't follow me.

Drew remains asleep.

SARA (con't.)
I'm going to find myself there. I'm going to leave the past behind and figure out who I am without you. I have to.

Another hour passes. Sara drives up to a Dunkin' and pulls into the drivethrough. Drew wakes up.

HAROLD
What can I get for you?

DREW
Oooh coffee time!

SARA
I'll have a latte with coconut milk, please.

HAROLD
Anything for him?

SARA
You can see him?

He can see me?
DREW

Of course I can see him.
HAROLD

But he's . . .
SARA

A ghost? So? I may be old but I ain't blind. Anything for him?
HAROLD

Uhhh . . .
SARA

Just a black coffee, please.
DREW

Alright, if you would just pull up to the next window.
HAROLD

I'm not paying for your coffee.
SARA
(as she pulls forward)

I can pay for my own drink, thank you very much.
DREW

Sara pulls up to the payment window and pays for her coffee with a giftcard. Drew pays with cash. Harold hands them their drinks.

Where are you folks headed?
HAROLD

I'm going to Toronto.
SARA

Fresh start?
HAROLD

College.
SARA

She's running away.

DREW

And taking her whole house with her?

HAROLD

Sara glances into the back seat. There are fewer things there than before.

It's not that much.

SARA

It's a lot.

DREW

I'm just bringing what I need.

SARA

And what you need is to run away to another country?

HAROLD

I need space.

SARA

From what?

DREW

From him.

SARA
(pointing at Drew)

Then why'd you bring him along?

HAROLD

Can I get my coffee now?

SARA

Sure.

HAROLD

Harold hands Sara the two coffees.

Thanks.

SARA

Got a tip for a poor old man?

HAROLD

Sara pulls a couple of coins from the cup holder and drops them in the tip jar.

HAROLD (con't.)

Thank you very much.

SARA

No problem.

Sara drives away.

DREW

Nice guy.

(Beat.)

Why *did* you bring me along?

SARA

I didn't.

DREW

I didn't just appear here out of nowhere.

SARA

Yes, you did.

DREW

Well then you must want me here.

SARA

Why the hell would I *want* you here?

DREW

Maybe because you're still in love with me.

SARA

Love is the absolute last thing I feel for you.

DREW

Love doesn't just disappear that quickly.

SARA

It does when the other person is a complete dick.

DREW

Look, it was late. I'd had too many drinks. I missed you like crazy. You really can't blame me for / making a mistake.

SARA

You *missed* me? Then you should have called me, you asshole. If you didn't want to be together anymore you could have just / told me.

DREW

I wanted to be with you! I wanted you!

SARA

Then why did you sleep with her?!

DREW

Because I'm stupid, okay? I'm young and stupid and you can't expect me to have my whole life figured out!

SARA

I am driving to another country for college. To study Pre-Med. So I can get into med school and become a doctor. I have my life figured out pretty damn well.

DREW

Well I don't! I didn't! You were leaving, Sara. You were going to another country. What was I supposed to do? We both know long distance wouldn't have worked.

SARA

Long distance wouldn't have worked because you can't stay committed to anything for more than like a second.

(Beat)

Give it to me.

DREW

What?

SARA

Give me the locket.

DREW

No.

Sara holds out her hand. Drew doesn't give her the locket, so Sara makes a grab for it. They fight.

DREW (con't.)

You're going to crash the damn car!

Sara doesn't give up.

DREW (con't.)

Fine.

Drew lets Sara take the locket. She slips it into her pocket.

Why did you keep it?
DREW (con't.)

I need to remember.
SARA

You need to remember me?
DREW

I need to remember how stupid I was.
SARA

A couple of hours pass. Drake is playing on the radio. Drew sleeps again. There is a large sign announcing, 'Welcome to Canada.' As they pass it, Drew startles awake.

You made it.
DREW

I made it.
SARA

Do you feel better now? Free?
DREW

I thought you would be gone by now.
SARA

Can't get rid of me that easy, sweetheart.
DREW

I need a drink.
SARA

Sara drives up to a Tim Horton's and pulls into the drivethrough.

What can I get for you miss?
HAROLD

Uh, hi.

SARA

Hi! Lovely day we're having, eh?

HAROLD

I'm sorry, you look really familiar. Don't you work at Dunkin Donuts?

SARA

It's Dunkin'. No, sorry. I work at Tim's.

HAROLD

Okay.

SARA

What can I get for you?

HAROLD

I'll have a vanilla latte, please.

SARA

Anything for the gentleman?

HAROLD

You can see him?

SARA

He can see me?

DREW

Of course I can see him. He's right there, isn't he?

HAROLD

But he's . . . Of course you can see him.

SARA

Can I get a double double, please?

DREW

Alright, if you would just pull up to the next window.

HAROLD

Isn't that the guy from the Dunkin Donuts?

SARA
(as she pulls forward)

Yes, I think it is.

DREW

Sara pulls up to the payment window and pays for her coffee. Drew pays with a credit card. Harold hands them their drinks.

Where are you folks headed?

HAROLD

I'm going to Toronto.

SARA

Fresh start, eh?

HAROLD

College . . . University.

SARA

She's running away.

DREW

And taking her whole house with her?

HAROLD

Sara glances into the back seat. There are fewer things there than before.

It's not that much.

SARA

It's a lot.

DREW

I couldn't leave any of it behind.

SARA

What is making you run away to another country?

HAROLD

I need space.

SARA

From what?

DREW

From myself. SARA

And you think another country will help with that? HAROLD

Can I get my coffee now? SARA

Of course, miss. HAROLD

Harold hands Sara the two coffees.

Thanks. SARA

Got a tip for a poor old man? HAROLD

Sara pulls a couple of coins from the cup holder and drops them in the tip jar.

Thank you very much. Have a lovely day. HAROLD (con't.)

You too. SARA

Sara drives away.

Nice guy. DREW

Bit strange. SARA

That too. DREW

I'm almost there. SARA

You've gotten rid of some things. DREW

SARA
(glancing back into the backseat)

I guess I have.

DREW

Why am I here, Sara?

SARA

I didn't bring you.

DREW

You did.

Beat.

SARA

How was I supposed to leave you behind?

DREW

It seems pretty easy to me. You don't even like me.

SARA

That's easy for you to say. I can't let you go just like that.

DREW

So you dragged me all the way to another country?

SARA

I thought by now I would feel . . . Lighter.

DREW

You can't bring everything with you and then expect the bad things to have been left behind. You can't pick and choose like that.

SARA

I don't want to lose you.

DREW

You've already lost me. Let me go, Sara.

SARA

No.

Drew reaches over and pulls the locket out of her pocket.

DREW

Why did you keep it?

SARA
(grabs for it)

Give it back!

DREW

Not until you tell me.

SARA
Because I couldn't. I just couldn't leave it behind. I guess that would mean . . . that we were really gone.

DREW
You are so scared to let me go that you're killing yourself holding on.

SARA
I want it.

DREW
You want to stay heartbroken? To stay angry? You want to go into this new life of yours still holding all of that?

SARA
I want you.

DREW
I'm not here.

SARA
How do I let you go?

DREW
You have to throw it out. You have to burn it.
He hands her the locket.

SARA
(laughs)
I can't burn anything. I'm driving.

DREW
It's a metaphor.

SARA
You'll leave a hole.

DREW
You can live with a hole. You don't always have to fill it.

SARA

You're right.
(Beat.)
You're right.

DREW
(gestures to the back)

It's almost empty now.

SARA

There are still some things in the trunk.

DREW

One step at a time.
(Pause.)
Do you think you can forgive me?

SARA

I think . . . Maybe not now. But soon, I think.

DREW

Thank you.
(Beat.)
Canada isn't so bad a place, I guess.

SARA

We're about an hour out. Are you coming with me?

DREW

No, I think my stop is coming up soon.

SARA

Where are you going?

DREW

I guess I'll find out when I get there.

SARA

I'm sorry that I dragged you all the way out here.

DREW

Don't worry about it. I'll find my way back.

SARA

I'll see you over Christmas break?

Probably not.

DREW

It's better that way, I guess.

SARA

Look.

DREW

Drew gestures at the backseat, which is now empty. Sara glances back at it and when she looks for him, Drew is gone. Sara takes a deep breath and stares ahead of her, out the windshield. She takes the locket and throws it out the window. Lights down.

End of play.

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Professor Rebecca Martin

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Light as a Feather and Canada

The topic I chose to focus on when writing my play was that of freedom. I was particularly interested in the legacy that Canada has as the country where slaves fled to from the United States of America. Instead of writing a play about literal slavery (which is a story that I do not feel qualified to tell), I decided to write about someone who is enslaved to her past and is trying to escape heartbreak by running away to Canada.

I was inspired by *Harlem Duet* and the character of Canada. In the play, the character Canada represents the safety and freedom that the country Canada has historically offered and, through the portrayal of the country as an absent father, reflects on how Canada has failed to live up to its reputation. In *Light as a Feather*, the country Canada offers that freedom to Sara. She is able to cross over the border without any obstacles and does not even have to pass through border services. This symbolizes how the actual change in country does nothing for Sara. Although Canada represents freedom, there is nothing inherent in the country that can offer that freedom to her. Moving to Canada will not cure her heartbreak. It is up to Sara to let go and move on by herself—no one else can do it for her. Because of this truth, it takes Sara more than crossing a border to let go of Drew.

I used the settings of Dunkin' and Tim Horton's to provide a contrast between the United States and Canada. Both are very similar fast-food chains, and the character Harold works in both places. He talks with Sara and Drew both times; however, the Canadian Harold is kinder

and more polite. This change in Harold's character reflects the relational nature of Canadians and Canadian culture as a whole. In addition, the artists that Sara plays in the car are all from Toronto, reflecting the legacy of music Canada has left in the world.

Finally, I decided to use the genre of magical realism because it seamlessly incorporates the "real" world with a touch of magic, much like Indigenous storytelling. Jessica Andrews, who specializes in Indigenous literatures and cultural studies, writes, "Thus, magic realists contest the notion of history as a linear and logical phenomenon from a wide variety of perspectives by including superstition, folklore, and the voices of otherwise neglected members of the population" (4). Stories written in the genre of magical realism incorporate magical elements that seem out of place in daily life and that most white Canadians would typically view as superstitious or fictional. Many Indigenous peoples, on the other hand, believe the spiritual and physical dimensions of the world overlap, and their stories and histories reflect this reality. Similarly, magical realism portrays fanciful elements as normal to everyday life—neither Sara nor Harold is scared or surprised when they see the ghost of Drew. Therefore, I chose the genre of magical realism because of its similarity to the Canadian Indigenous worldview.

Works Cited

Andrews, Jennifer. "Rethinking the Relevance of Magic Realism for English-Canadian Literature: Reading Ann Marie MacDonald's *Fall On Your Knees*." *Studies in Canadian Literature*, vol. 24, no. 1, Jan. 1999, pp. 1-19.