

Butterfly Kisses

by Ashley Nader

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ONE ACT PLAY

Written by: Ashley Nader

Sarah Pinkton: News presenter and friend of Lisa.

Michael Feathermen: Father of Katey Feathermen, works as a security guard and helping with other issues for his boss, Paulo.

Lisa Feathermen: Mother of Katey Feathermen, runs a beauty shop and is friends with Sarah.

Richard Wheeler: Sarah's boss

Scene 1

(This takes place in the Feathermen's lounge/ kitchen. Lisa has just gotten home. Michael and Lisa begin to argue. Through the discussion things become heated.)

Lisa: I'm sorry I was late, there was a car broken down on the highway.

Michael: I have already phoned Paulo and told him I'm running late and will make up the time lost. So I won't be able to make the petting zoo tomorrow. Katey's at Mrs. McMillan helping with her garden patch.

Lisa: That woman's a Godsend; pity she is not this close with her own grandkids.

Michael: A reminder, she leaves tomorrow to visit her sister.

Lisa: I remember, another thing to add to my list of things to do after the petting zoo, use the spare keys to switch on lights and collect the mail while she's gone.

Michael: She said she'd bring Katey back in about an hour. Thought you could unwind and eat in silence.

Lisa: I'm gathering Katey has already eaten?

Michael: Yes, she's eaten, had two helpings, her homework has been completed and I checked it, so there's no surprises come Sunday night. I saw the toy chest is broken and will fix that next week. I cooked veggies and a pork roast.

Lisa: I'm not surprised the chest is falling apart, she uses that thing as her personal trampoline, you're not strict enough with her. Pork again?

Michael: Well, beggars can't be choosie. The extra pork from work saves us and allows us to put it to better use. Katey likes the pork.

Lisa: Oh, come off it. She only eats it because you say it's chicken.

Michael: Clearly, you've had a great day. Maybe I should start over. I've cooked, there's chicken and vegetables in the microwave for you.

Lisa: What are you doing?

Michael: Well if it works for our daughter, maybe it will work for you.

Lisa: I'm trying my best but when I hear his name I just . . . I lose all sanity.

Michael: I know it can't be easy, but we will get through this.

Lisa: We? You're the reason he is in our lives. Everything we touch and do, he's a reminder. He's a plague.

Michael: You said you forgave me, and we were putting this behind us. Yet every day and every chance you have, you throw it back in my face.

Lisa: I . . . I am struggling to move forward with a clean slate. You've broken me and I don't know how to put the pieces back together.

(Michael stands there speechless unsure of how to react or what to do.)

I did forgive you, otherwise I wouldn't be here.

Michael: Technically that's not true.

Lisa: It's hard to forget what you did, when he is in every part of our lives. We no longer sleep together thanks to him. I can't even remember the last time we all had a meal together as a family. I go to work thinking that's one part of my life he would not worm his way into, but no. It's only a matter of time before he goes after our daughter.

Michael: He's not like that. He just wants me to work off my debt.

Lisa: Again, your debt becomes my problem, our daughter's problem. What stability are we giving her with this hanging over our heads? I'm constantly living a lie, all the fucking time.

Michael: I know I fucked up badly and I am getting help, the meetings are helping, even though a part of me wants to throw it all away, I'm doing my best to show restraint.

Lisa: *(Laughs bitterly)* You're kidding right? *(Mockingly)* "I'm Michael, I'm showing restraint and am on the straight and narrow." We have nothing left for you to gamble, unless you want to stick our child on the roulette wheel.

Michael: There's nothing else I can say but just show you that I will make it up to you and I will get us out of this.

Lisa: *(She takes a deep breath, wants to be affectionate but can't make herself).* I know you are, but it is consuming me, eating me alive. He phoned me today and arranged another delivery. You promised it would only happen once.

Michael: That's what he told me, I took his word for it and he said that if you helped with the delivery it would halve the debt.

Lisa: What about all the other legitimate creditors we owe? That's how this mess happened in the first place. Maxed credit cards that you kept hidden. Underground gambling rings.

Michael: I took it too far.

Lisa: Without thinking of the consequences.

Michael: I will do everything in my power to make it right and get him out of our lives.

Lisa: I know you will, I'm just frustrated and scared. Even if we get rid of him we still have so much money to pay back.

Michael: You can't get money from a corpse.

Lisa: We must face facts that we're living in a fool's paradise. It's the perfect cover up for his "product". *(Pause)* It's been such a dream to have my own beauty shop with my own products and to spread health and beauty the way I have always dreamed. With the hope of passing this onto Katey as my legacy. *(Pause)* I had to open bottles of shampoo and make space for little baggies of coke. Slice open bars of my *(emphasis)* homemade soap scrape out the middles and fill them with pills and glue the soap back together. *(Pause)* I've become a drug mule and for what? For you, for our child. *(Begins to break down and whispers to herself)*. Clearly love is blind, no matter the consequence.

Michael: *(He goes to her and helps wipe her tears)* I love you and I will make this right.

Lisa: You better get to work, I'll get the chest fixed. I'll go over and fetch Katey and wish Mrs. Mc Millan well on her travels.

(Lights Dim)

Scene 2

(Sarah is behind a desk facing the audience head on, as though she is reading a teleprompter)

Sarah: Welcome back to the early sunrise news. The Ticketpro Dome located by the Northgate Shopping Centre saw an influx of breeders and cat lovers alike at the 20th annual Johannesburg cat show. Various breeds were on display to the public. The competition was tight this year with previous winners wanting to reclaim their titles and new competitors ready to prove to the judges they had what it takes to go all the way. I was there to witness all the action as it unfolded. We are going to a quick commercial and when we come back, all the thrilling highlights of this Cat-tastic weekend so far.

(Lights dim end of scene)

Scene 3

(Sarah is in Richard's office discussing her career after finishing her news piece on the cat show).

Richard: Well done on another good piece. What did you want to talk about?

Sarah: Richard, I know you have only been here for 3 months, but I need something more stimulating. I cannot keep doing cat shows. I am allergic, my body can only handle so many antihistamines.

Richard: It's not just cat shows.

Sarah: *(Dull and mundane, as though when she talks like the life is being sucked out of her)* It's driving to Boksburg to interview the old couple who are convinced that when they walk around their local park they can hear the pigeons speaking to them, planning a revolt to take over the world. The exploration through Durban to find the best curry recipes. To unravel the change of the Orange Free State to the Free State. Where did all the Oranges go to? Speaking to the mothers in Pretoria about their breast milk tart recipes. They invited me back to really let their hair down and see if the recipes will work with almond milk. I'm on the edge of my seat.

Richard: The audiences respond to you. Since we've put you in early morning slots . . .

Sarah: The 04:00 to 06:00 slot, my demographic are insomniacs, wide awake druggies and mothers who can't get their babies back to sleep.

Richard: With these puff pieces our ratings have improved and our demographic has increased.

Sarah: While my IQ continues to drop every time I do these pieces.

Richard: We've all had to report on news we don't agree with or that doesn't challenge us. It's par for the course, we all have to serve our time in the trenches.

Sarah: Even before this slot I was doing these pieces. I am better than this. I know things. I have a vast knowledge in politics, history, culture, religion, finance, oil prices, the list goes on.

Richard: I tell you what. If I come across a piece of news that you can report on, I will give it you, but you still continue to do the morning pieces and where I can I will give you a chance to report on breaking news.

Sarah: Thank you Richard, thank you so much, you won't be disappointed.

(Richard and his desk fade in darkness and Sarah goes to the other side of the stage and phones Lisa.)

Sarah: Hey, sorry to phone so early, but our pre arrangement can still happen if you are keen . . . I should be at you in about 45 minutes, I will pick up donuts and see you shortly.

(Lights dim)

Scene 4

(Sarah is at Lisa's house, they are on the couch, Lisa is in her dressing gown, Sarah is still wearing the same clothes from the studio as she went straight to Lisa's house for a catch up.)

Sarah: Don't be shy with the coffee, make it strong, I want the spoon to stand up straight.

Lisa: Another jam-packed work weekend?

Sarah: Was covering the cat show. Thankfully Becky is there to cover the last day.

Lisa: Riveting! You must have been sneezing your head off.

Sarah: Was popping antihistamines like tic tacs. I just want my bed and a hot bath.

Lisa: So I should feel privileged for your presence.

Sarah: Damn straight. With you busy at the shop and me running around like a chicken with my head chopped off, this seemed like the best time to take advantage of. Tell Michael you can make it up to him with extra cuddle time tonight.

Lisa: Cuddle time, what are we in high school?

Sarah: Okay, sexy time.

Lisa: That's a pipe dream. He has been working night shift for the last month. We are like two ships passing each other. He comes home while Katey and I are getting ready to leave, passes out for most of the day, fetches Katey in the afternoon and then cooks dinner. I come home and we swap shifts.

Sarah: That sounds awful! Sorry sweetie.

Lisa: I'm just grateful he has a job and the shop has picked up.

Sarah: I know you don't like to talk about this, but how are the finances?

Lisa: We got an email from the bank last week, we have defaulted on the bond and have been handed over to lawyers for legal proceedings.

Sarah: I can go to the bank first thing Monday morning and apply for a loan, my credit score is pretty good. How much do you need?

Lisa: That's very sweet of you, it won't be enough. We have maxed our bond and the outstanding amounts and penalties are in the hundreds of thousands.

Sarah: I didn't know it was that bad?

Lisa: We borrowed against the bond for the startup of my business and other poor investments that didn't pan

out.

Sarah: Is there no way for Michael to get a different job that pays better?

Lisa: We've tried, he's gone for numerous job interviews but he only has a matric and he's knocking on 40's door.

Sarah: I need to tell you something, it's only hearsay but apparently the owner of the pig farm is involved in some deep and dark wheelings and dealings, like underground casinos, illegal fire arms, money laundering. No concrete evidence has been found but whenever the police have a witness or evidence, it seems to disappear.

Lisa: I've also heard the rumors about Paulo, yet Michael says he's never picked up on anything peculiar. The reason why he's working night shift is due to the stealing of the pigs and arson by animal rights activists in previous months.

Sarah: It made big headlines. I don't know what to say my friend. Just know I am here for Michael, Katey and you.

Lisa: I haven't said anything to Katey, I keep hoping for a miracle. I know it sounds ridiculous but I'm hoping the lawyers can help with a stringent payment plan that we can stick to so we can keep our home. *(Pause)* I'm sorry, you come here to be with your friend, and this starts happening *(She begins to cry)*.

Sarah: Don't be ridiculous. *(Puts her arm around Lisa)* That's what friends are for, through the highs and lows. I just wish I could do more.

Lisa: You being here makes the world of difference. I feel like lately all I do is work and then come home and continue my duties at home. I just wish sometimes that Katey would go away . . . for a while. That I could find sanity and get a chance to be the better version of myself that I know I can be. At the moment I feel no one is getting anything from me.

Sarah: Thinly spread in every direction. Jack of all trades, master of none.

Lisa: Exactly.

Sarah: So, let's make a date when we can be just us – manicures, wine, chocolate – my treat and we'll just let everything hang out. Emotionally, mentally and physically.

Lisa: Deal. Mrs. Mc Millan is away at the moment, she's gone to visit her sister who's recovering from surgery, but when she is back, that would be wonderful.

Sarah: How has Katey been with everything?

Lisa: There was a teacher-parent conference last week which I went to as Michael had to work. The teachers gave great feedback on Katey saying she is friendly, sweet and a team player. She helps clean up the classroom at the end of the day. There seems to be no change in her behavior, which I am so grateful for as Michael and I are far from okay.

Sarah: Children are resilient and the love you and Michael have for her is incredible, you two would literally move heaven and earth for her.

Lisa: We've tried through all ups and down to ensure she sticks to a routine.

Sarah: She's growing up so fast. It seems like yesterday when we were scrunched up in my bathroom while you took the pregnancy test.

Lisa: It feels like a lifetime ago and at the same time the blink of an eye. It's mad, on 31 July she'll be 8.

Sarah: I'm sure she is excited.

Lisa: We've pre ordered her a Minion cake.

Sarah: Adorable, she'll love it. Before you know it, she'll be 18.

Lisa: Fuck a duck.

Sarah: It feels like I haven't seen her in ages.

Lisa: Well she has been asking when you will take her to the park again.

Sarah: Do you think it's too early to wake her up?

Lisa: I think she would love that. It will give me a chance to pull myself towards myself and make some more coffee and then we can all have donuts for breakfast.

(Sarah goes off stage to show that she is going to wake up Katey and Lisa tidies up and starts clearing and getting things ready.)

(Sarah still off stage starts elevating her scream for Katey, she screams three varied pitches and then screams for Lisa.)

(Lisa is unsure of what is happening, gets panicked and on the third scream she is almost off stage when Lisa screams for her.)

Scene 5

(Sarah has been called into Richards's office.)

Sarah: What was so important that I had to come in?

Richard: How are you?

Sarah: I am . . . honestly I don't know. I just wish we could find out more and know what's happening?

Richard: I can only imagine what they are feeling, not knowing.

Sarah: Everyone is talking at them as though they should know the lingo and the procedures. No offense Richard, we could have had this conversation over the phone. I want to be there for Lisa and do all I can. Me being here is not helping. My leave has been approved by HR and I have handed over my pieces to Stephanie until I get back.

Richard: That's exactly what I wanted to talk to you about. I think you can do more than you know. You can run this story.

Sarah: Are you mad.

Richard: Why?

Sarah: As a journalist I am to portray issues and events as neutral and unbiased as possible.

Richard: Which I have no doubt you will.

Sarah: How can I be objective when I know these people? They are literally my second family.

Richard: You can be on the ground with your friend and report on the situation. What do you think?

Sarah: I don't know. Isn't it an invasion of their privacy? Look at me Richard, I'm a mess. Instead of being supportive I'm going to have to investigate?

Richard: You can do both. This story has your name written all over it. The story is building huge coverage. If we don't act on this quickly other channels will. People want to know what happened. You can provide the facts and the heart that this story needs, and you can be there for your friend.

Sarah: I'm not sure.

Richard: I am not going to force you, just remember you came to me a few days ago wanting something new and different. I know you can do this.

Sarah: I have never done something like this before. Report on this type of news. I wouldn't know where to begin.

Richard: I can help you.

Sarah: Can I at least think about it and discuss it with Lisa and Michael?

Richard: This is very time sensitive from all aspects. I don't mean to be a bastard but it's now or nothing.

Sarah: *(She stands and paces)* Okay. I'll do it. What is the first step?

Richard: To inform the public, go to hair and make-up and I'll give you a slot in the prime news.

(Lights dim, Richards Office fades away and Sarah does her slot as though she is speaking from a tele prompter.)

Sarah: Thank you, Michelle. Sorry regular viewers for the break in transmission. Please be on the lookout for 7 year old Catherine Feathermen also known as Katey who went missing on 21 July 2019 from her home in Randburg. She was last seen wearing pink pyjamas and has a birth mark on the left side of her neck. Photos provided by the family are on our website and our offices and your local police department can be contacted to provide further information. Your assistance in this matter is appreciated, let's reunite her back with her parents Lisa and Michael Feathermen. Back to you Michelle.

(Lights dim, Richard's desk appears back on stage)

Richard: That went well.

Sarah: I just hope all this publicity makes a difference and brings Katey home.

Richard: This casts a bigger net, gets people involved and creates awareness. My friend at the station said the AMBER Alert was put in place at the same time the crime scene was sealed. The prints found in Katey's bedroom are still being analysed, he should have feedback tomorrow. The Feathermen's have been interviewed and all evidence has been collected, the police have informed them that Katey's room has been unsealed and no longer a crime scene.

Sarah: We are not interfering with the investigation, are we?

Richard: As long as we mention the basics and not reveal any information from the police that will interfere or leak pertinent information to the public, we are well within our rights as journalists.

Scene 6

(Lisa is in the lounge and puts two cups of tea on the coffee table. She looks left and right to make sure no one sees her, grabs a jar of pills from her pocket and takes two pills out, drops them into one of the tea cups, adds extra sugar and gives a good stir.)

(Michael comes on stage as he is on the phone with Paulo. Lisa listens with one ear.)

Michael: I understand . . . The police have not told us anything further than that the crime scene has been unsealed . . . I didn't know that would happen . . . I will keep you posted . . . Okay I will wait for you to make contact . . . *(Paulo hangs up, Michael ends the call and throws the phone on the couch.)*
Dammit!!

Lisa: What's happened?

Michael: Did you know what Sarah was going to do?

