

Woof

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Workshopped at the 2010 New Harmony Project

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Characters:

LJ Freeman, 30, African American

KAREN Freeman, 30, White Americanf

JACKIE Freeman, 9, their daughter

RUBY Freeman, 45, African American

MEL Tudor, 38, White American

MRS. JONES, 58, African American

A mid-western American city large enough to have a professional football team. The third millennium.

Note: There are no blackouts between scenes. Locations are implied, stuff shouldn't impede, but might accumulate as litter.

Prologue

A large paper poster showing a quarterback throwing a football. It says: "Super Bowl, War of the Titans." Suddenly, bursting through the paper is LJ, roaring. He is in street clothes except for a helmet; he carries a football.

He freezes for a moment, looking like the image in the poster. Then he takes off the helmet, puts down the football as he enters **scene one**, day two. LJ's den. A nervous LJ paces, looks out the window. MEL enters with his briefcase.

(relieved) Mel, hey.

LJ

Hey, Man.

MEL

(LJ embraces him.)

I tried to call, I just --

MEL

I should have called you --

LJ

It's a circus out there --

MEL

How did you get through?

LJ

Curtis made a hole for me. Whatever you pay him, double it. Nobody's getting through Curtis.

MEL

Nobody got through him on the line, either.

LJ

I'm...we should -- (looking in his briefcase) There's so much --

MEL

Sit, sit --

LJ

(MEL takes a yellow legal pad from his briefcase.)

MEL

...Are you okay?

LJ

Ha --

MEL

I'm sorry...This can't wait.

LJ

What can't wait?

MEL

We need to figure out what you're going to say --

LJ

I don't want to say anything.

MEL

People need to see that you're --

LJ

Haven't they seen enough?

MEL

They need to see that you're sorry.

LJ

I'm sorry, God, I'm sorry.

MEL

Not just about getting caught --

LJ

Is that what they think -- is that what the idiots think?!

MEL

Hey, it's okay.

LJ

(over) It's the truth.

MEL

Good. Then it's easier. But the sooner we get out there—

LJ

You do it. You say something. You be the spokesman. You do it.

MEL

I can't do it.

LJ

What do I pay you for?

MEL

Nobody cares what I say. You have to --

LJ

No.

MEL

Okay...We'll wait.

LJ

...How's Rico?

MEL

Furious. Talking to anybody with a microphone.

LJ

Oh, man...

MEL

You have to call him.

LJ

I'm not calling anybody.

MEL

Okay, okay. We'll just...wait. For a little while.

(LJ takes a drink from a flask.)

MEL

It's eleven o'clock in the --

LJ

Mel. Don't.

MEL

Okay. (Brief pause while LJ has a drink.) What is that? I've never seen that.

LJ

Present from a cop. For an autograph.

MEL

What's in it?

LJ

Fancy scotch. He keeps it in this so "nobody knows he's drinking."

MEL

It looks like silver.

LJ

They took good care of me. Food, scotch. (more sarcasm) Brought me a woman, too. Cops, they know what you need.

MEL

LJ -- does Karen know?

LJ

It was Karen. "We got something for you LJ. A real hottie." I wanted to stick my fist down his cop throat. Karen pulled me off. I don't know how she got me outta there. Nobody came with her, a whole locker room full of my teammates and their wives and our friends, and nobody comes. Curtis got me into bed.

MEL

I'm sorry I wasn't there.

LJ

I think I'm still drunk -- maybe I'm getting drunk all over again.

MEL

I'm not sure how we should play that.

LJ

What, play what?

MEL

(creatively expositing) You get caught up in the celebration, the start of the season, last year's Super Bowl winners heading to summer camp to prepare for another glorious season -- you have too much to drink you don't know what you're doing. Or you snapped from all the pressure. Temporary insanity.

LJ

That's all true. Say all that. What you just said.

MEL

We will pick one explanation. Start piling them on top of each other, it all sounds like a lie. We will pick one truth and stick with it.

LJ

Okay, Mel. You pick it. Pick a truth. Pick a truth that will fix it.

MEL

I'll write it, but you have to talk to the press, you're the one has to say it. You have to show -- --

LJ

Fix it before camp.

MEL

There's not enough time --

LJ

I want this over.

MEL

It isn't...it doesn't... Oh, God, LJ. You're not going to camp.

LJ

What -- ? ...No.

MEL

They dropped you. It's all over the news.

LJ

They did not drop me.

MEL

Just give it some time.

LJ

They didn't even talk to me.

MEL

Champion saw the tape --

LJ

Whatever happened to innocent before proven guilty?

MEL

...Have you seen the tape?

LJ

I don't need to see the tape -- I was there.

MEL

It's... (MEL stops himself.) You need to give it some time. It'll blow over -- Everything blows over. But not today, not before camp. You might have to sit out the season.

LJ

I have a contract.

MEL

There's a clause --

LJ

But they still have to pay me --

MEL

No. They have to pay you if you're injured. Morals clause, you're just out. Come on, we'll give it some time. America always forgives her heroes. It's the American way.

LJ

That's right. I'm a hero. Did everybody forget that?

MEL

You rest for a couple of days, take it easy. I know you didn't...you didn't mean to do it. You were under a lot of stress, and you...snapped.

LJ

Yeah, say that.

MEL

I'll work on what you're going to say -- for when you're ready.  
I'll try to get through to Champion.

LJ

You haven't talked to him?

MEL

I...I am unable to get past his assistant. But I will. At some point, he has to talk to me. (packing up) I'll call you as soon as I know --

LJ

(erupting) I'm sorry, World. I'm sorry Mister Champion. Sorry, sorry, damn fine sorry here --

MEL

I'm doing the best I can, LJ.

LJ

Call me tomorrow.

MEL

I won't know anything tomorrow.

LJ

Call me anyway.

MEL

Okay. I'll go out the back... Are we okay?

LJ

Yeah...yes, of course.

MEL

Okay. I'll call you tomorrow. Take care of yourself, LJ.

(MEL exits. LJ looks out the window, steps back.)

LJ

Karen! Baby?

(We hear her from afar, then she enters)

What, Honey? Where's Mel? KAREN

He left. LJ

Oh. Okay. I got to -- KAREN

Don't go. LJ

I'm making -- KAREN

It can wait. LJ

(Brief pause.)

What were you shouting about? KAREN

I'm sorry I shouted. LJ

...I got to feed the kids. KAREN

I'll come help you. LJ

(Forcing a smile.) You can't help me feed the baby. KAREN

But I can watch. LJ

(Smiling at the much needed joke.) That'll be a big help. KAREN

You feed Little L, I'll fix Jackie a sandwich. LJ

KAREN

Really?

LJ

Sure, what's the big deal?

KAREN

Nothing. You just -- You usually -- I thought you'd want to be alone in your den.

LJ

Well, I don't.

KAREN

...The sandwich is made. You can cut the crust off the bread.

LJ

Jackie eats crust.

KAREN

She doesn't like it.

LJ

She eats it for me.

KAREN

Because you eat it. She wants to be like you.

LJ

What do you do with it?

KAREN

I throw it out. I don't like it either.

LJ

Don't do that.

KAREN

Honey, we don't like it.

LJ

Give it to me, I like it.

KAREN

I'll give it to the birds.

LJ

What birds?

KAREN

The birds...in the yard.

LJ

Oh. I thought went and got her the love birds.

KAREN

I didn't --

LJ

Jackie should have the birds. It's good to take care of something. I never got a pet -- I had to sneak them in. Frogs. Chipmunks, spiders. Once I sneaked a stray dog up the elevator...God --

KAREN

It's okay --

LJ

Big old filthy hound dog. I saved him. I loved him. Ha. Who's going to believe that -- ? Let's get her the birds --

KAREN

I don't --

LJ

We can have what we want. This ain't public housing, We own this house, we can do what we want in our own house.

KAREN

Honey --

LJ

We can tear it down, we feel like it. Tear it down, tear it to the ground and shove it up their asses --

KAREN

Shh shh.

LJ

What -- they gonna take my house away now, my house!

KAREN

It's okay. It's just me.

LJ

What?!

KAREN

Shh....It's okay.

LJ

I know it's okay, it's my house, it better be okay.

KAREN

Nobody's taking anything. I'm not taking anything.

LJ

What do they know, they see the tape, they think they know something, they don't know nothing --

KAREN

We'll get the birds for Christmas...It's not a good idea right now. For us to get a pet.

(Brief pause. LJ quiets himself slightly.)

LJ

Well, you're the boss. You're the boss of the house. We'll wait until Christmas to give my child love birds.

KAREN

...You drinking that nasty whisky the cop give you? (She takes it, takes a sip.) That is awful.

LJ

It's very expensive.

KAREN

You want some Coca Cola with it?

LJ

Coca Cola and single grain Scotch?

KAREN

Why not?

LJ

Not on the Planet Earth.

KAREN

I don't know who makes those rules.

LJ

Professional drinking people. So the rest of us don't waste money experimenting. Not to mention the smirks from the frat boys when you order a Coke and Glen Livet.

KAREN

That happen to you?

LJ

Don't you know it.

KAREN

Well, I think a Coke would help the burning. Or a glass of ice. Something. (She takes the flask.) I'll put this away.

LJ

(looking around) Where's my TV?

KAREN

Curtis put it in the garage.

LJ

Why? (Brief pause.) What?

KAREN

I don't want Jackie seeing the tape.

LJ (anguish)

Oh no, noooo, I didn't even think, has she --

KAREN

No, no, it's okay.

LJ

I'm her Daddy, she can't see that.

KAREN

I know, she won't --

LJ

I gotta -- (He looks out the window.) Oh man. I gotta --

(LJ grabs his hoodie, and exits out the back. KAREN exits.)