



FOR THE LOYAL

BY LEE BLESSING



DRAMATISTS
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For the Loyal:

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Centre Stage, Greenville, SC

FOR THE LOYAL had its world premiere on April 24, 2015 at the Illusion Theater (Michael Robins and Bonnie Morris, Producing Directors) in Minneapolis, Minnesota. It was directed by Michael Robins; the set design was by Dean Holzman; the lighting design was by Michael Wangen; the sound design was by C. Andrew Mayer; the costume design was by Barb Portinga; and the stage manager was D. Marie Long. The cast was as follows:

MIA Anna Sundberg
TOBY Sam Bardwell
COACH TANNER HALE Mark Rosenwinkel
COACH MITCH CARLSON Garry Geiken
THE BOY Michael Fell

CHARACTERS

MIA, 20s

TOBY, 20s

COACH TANNER HALE, 40s

COACH MITCH CARLSON, 50s

THE BOY, 15

PLACE

The Midwest. A graduate student-housing apartment on the campus of a major state university, and elsewhere.

TIME

Early 1990s, evening.

FOR THE LOYAL

The stage is dark. Lights up on Mia. She is noticeably pregnant, standing over Toby, who looks extremely nervous.

MIA. What kind of crime?

TOBY. A sex crime. Like, you know, with a kid.

MIA. A *kid*?

TOBY. You can't tell anybody.

MIA. I can't?

TOBY. No. *Christ*, no! I shouldn't even be telling you. Coach Hale told me not to. But ... shit, I have to tell someone. Fuck. *Fuck!* I am so fucking *scared!*

MIA. Why should you be scared? You didn't do anything.

TOBY. I *saw* it! I'm the witness.

MIA. So?

TOBY. I shouldn't have told you.

MIA. Toby, I don't understand. You saw a crime, right?

TOBY. Yeah.

MIA. But you weren't involved.

TOBY. 'Course I was involved, I *saw* it!

MIA. But you weren't the criminal.

TOBY. 'Course not.

MIA. Where'd it happen?

TOBY. His house. Coach Carlson's.

MIA. Why were you there?

TOBY. I went to give him some tapes for the weekend. Stuff he has to look at. I forgot to give 'em to him at work. He doesn't live far, so I thought I'd go over there. You know ...

MIA. To his house?

TOBY. Yeah, and — Oh, Jesus. Oh, *Jesus!* What in hell was I thinking? I should have called first. I should've ...

MIA. I don't understand. What did you see?

TOBY. I'm not supposed to tell you.

MIA. Who said?

TOBY. Coach Hale.

MIA. I'm your wife, Toby. He can't tell you that.

TOBY. He said I shouldn't.

MIA. You already have.

TOBY. Fuck me. Fuck fuck fuck *fuck* me. I am so fucked.

MIA. You're not ... Toby, you're not — You're okay, you understand? You're okay.

TOBY. I didn't mean to see it.

MIA. Right. I know. What did you see?

TOBY. You don't just go over to a coach's house, especially Carlson. People say things about him. You know, that he —

MIA. I've heard.

TOBY. Right. Right — Well anyway, I walked up the driveway, the garage door was closed — You can't ever tell anyone this.

MIA. I wasn't there.

TOBY. You can't tell that I *told*.

MIA. What happened?

TOBY. There was music coming from the garage. I was gonna go to the front door ... I really was, but — I thought maybe he's working on his car or something. There was a regular door too, so I stuck my head in and ... The music was loud — some Nine Inch Nails shit.

MIA. Was Carlson there?

TOBY. No. But ... the driver's door was open. I looked in, and ...

MIA. And what?

TOBY. There was this boy. On the other side ... in the passenger seat.

MIA. Did he see you?

TOBY. No, his eyes were shut. His clothes were on the floor.

MIA. He was naked?

TOBY. Yeah — just sitting there, listening to the music.

MIA. Where was Carlson?

TOBY. I didn't know. But then there was a light, and I looked up at the door that went in the house, and Carlson was standing there.

MIA. What'd you say?

TOBY. Nothing.

MIA. What'd he say?

TOBY. Nothing. He was carrying two beers. He was naked too.

MIA. Jesus.

TOBY. He had boxers on, but that's all. And he was ...

MIA. What?

TOBY. (*Gesturing.*) He had, like a tent going, you know?

MIA. Oh, shit. What'd you do?

TOBY. Nothing. We just ... stared at each other. I looked back at the kid, and — fuck, he was staring at me too.

MIA. God.

TOBY. I dropped the tapes and tore outta there. Like I was a kid myself. Ran almost the whole way back to campus — like a mile. I didn't know what to do. I went to see Coach Hale.

MIA. To tell him?

TOBY. I had to tell.

MIA. Of course.

TOBY. Hale's my boss.

MIA. I know.

TOBY. He's Carlson's boss.

MIA. I understand the relationships —

TOBY. There's a chain of command is what I'm saying. I had to respect that.

MIA. Telling Coach Hale, I understand.

TOBY. He told me not to tell anyone.

MIA. Yes.

TOBY. But I told you.

MIA. Yes, honey. I know you did.

TOBY. I told you. I couldn't help myself.

MIA. I know.

TOBY. I couldn't.

MIA. (*Holding him.*) I know. I know you couldn't help it. It's all right. I know. (*Lights shift. Coach Hale enters.*)

HALE. I'll tell you, it's the best feeling in the world. Finding a moribund program — you know, one that's in mortal disgrace — academic scandal, players taking money, rules broken everywhere you look. It's sad of course, but it's the best thing possible for a coach.

MIA. Why?

HALE. Because expectations are rock-bottom. Whatever you do will improve things. Everyone will think you're a genius.

TOBY. But you really are a genius.

HALE. (*To Mia, with a smile.*) See? It works. No, I'll tell you — I've been lucky here. Five years ago this program was on a slab, being corpse-raped by the NCAA, pardon the expression. And the

one genius thing I did was to bend down and kiss the dead, open hole that used to be its mouth —

MIA. Ew.

HALE. Again, pardon the expression — and breathe new life into it. That's really all it took; this place had a proud tradition. Once we got the scholarships reinstated, the whole thing came back together, almost like a reflex. Just reanimated, like Frankenstein.

MIA. The monster.

HALE. What?

MIA. The monster's reanimated. Frankenstein's the doctor. You'd be Frankenstein.

HALE. Anyway, something's definitely breathing again, 'cause we're going to start the fall ranked in the top ten. How's that for reanimating?

TOBY. Fantastic.

HALE. Been a long road, lot of sacrifice. But we're there. And we're only going in one direction. Right, Toby?

TOBY. Straight up.

HALE. Straight the fuck up!

MIA. Pardon the expression.

HALE. Sorry. I get over-enthusiastic. Things are looking bright, though. People in this state have their pride back. Hell, they've got their balls back, and they thought no one could do that for 'em. Yeah, there may be better feelings in the world, but right now I sure as hell can't think what they are.

MIA. Well. That's great news.

TOBY. Isn't it?

HALE. So, anyway. That's why I need to steal Toby this evening. (*To Toby.*) We have to talk about your status for the fall. Thought we'd do it over a beer. That sound all right?

TOBY. Yes, sir.

HALE. Won't take long. I promise not to get him drunk.

MIA. (*Staring out a window.*) Is that someone in your car?

HALE. Oh — yeah. That's just ... another coach.

MIA. Which one?

TOBY. Mia —

HALE. That's all right. Coach Carlson. Thought Mitch should join us, since he's your boss man.

TOBY. Right.

MIA. So the three of you are — ?

TOBY. Mia.

HALE. How far along are you, anyway?

MIA. Pardon?

HALE. You know, the —

MIA. Oh, seven months.

HALE. Boy or girl?

MIA. Boy. So you three are —

HALE. A boy! That's great! Maybe we can recruit him someday.

TOBY. Maybe so.

HALE. Okay. Like I say, we won't be long —

MIA. Toby —

TOBY. Not now, honey. Gotta do this.

HALE. You have a good night.

MIA. Toby, shouldn't we — ?

TOBY. Later, okay?

MIA. Toby, don't — (*As the men start out.*) How old was he?

HALE. Sorry?

MIA. I'm wondering how old he was.

TOBY. Mia —

HALE. Who?

MIA. The boy. The naked boy. The one in Coach Carlson's car. (*Lights shift. Coach Carlson enters. Slowly, as he speaks, they join him in the scene.*)

CARLSON. I know the rumors. What can I say? I like kids. Like being around 'em, helping 'em. No one sees that, of course. They look at a man my age around boys, and they only think one thing. Amazing anyone even tries to become a Boy Scout leader, priest, whatever. All the prejudice you face. I know there's a foundation for it. Lots of cases around, crimes and stuff. But that's not me. What am I s'posed to do? Not help kids? Not set up a program? Leave 'em homeless, begging on the street? I take an interest; most people don't. So they're jealous. What I do humiliates 'em. They're too busy, they're too involved with their own lives to make an effort. I'm out there trying. I'll tell you — when somebody starts teaching or working a program with kids or running a camp or Boy Scouts, they're signing up for more trouble than it's worth. People judge you. They judge you every minute of the day, and they judge you when they really don't know.

MIA. They don't?

CARLSON. Hell, no. Nobody knows what's in my heart.

FOR THE LOYAL

by Lee Blessing

4M, 1W

Toby and Mia are graduate students with a bright future ahead of them: a baby on the way and a college coaching job for Toby. But when Toby stumbles across a secret that threatens to derail their future, he and Mia must decide between honesty and loyalty, and whether doing something wrong is the only way to do what's right. Inspired by the Penn State sexual abuse scandal, FOR THE LOYAL is an emotional and thought-provoking night of theater.

"Part of Blessing's pedigree is writing zeitgeist-y scripts that tinker with time, and here he proposes a couple different realities that proceed on a parallel track. In one, Mia acts as judge, jury and executioner. In another, she stays silent for the sake of her husband's career. While her decision whether to act has significant implications on Mia's life, Blessing interestingly and somewhat disturbingly posits that the maw of major-university athletics grinds on regardless."

—St. Paul Pioneer Press (St. Paul, MN)

"All of us like to think that if we witnessed a crime, especially against a child, we would report it to the police ... But would we? What if we didn't have any actual evidence, just suspicions? What if reporting the incident would destroy our lives? ... Such are the questions posed in FOR THE LOYAL. ... It's a powerful, engaging, thought-provoking exploration of this horrifying and all too familiar situation." —CherryandSpoon.com

Also by Lee Blessing
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