

♪ upbeat music playing ♪

JONATHAN: Welcome to Hear/Now: A Season of Audio Theater from Keen Company. We are an award-winning, non-profit theater in New York City. Championing identification and connection through stories about the decisive moments that change us. I'm Jonathan Silverstein, the artistic director, and it's my pleasure to welcome you to "All We Need is Us" by James Anthony Tyler, the third production in our Season of Audio Theater. Join us in embracing the virtual Off-Broadway experience. Take a moment to find your seat, silence any distractions, and lower your house lights. It's time to settle in for a night at the theater and enjoy....

All We Need is Us

Friday, July 3rd, 2020. Early morning. A modest New York City apartment, in Harlem. Boxes everywhere. A very pregnant HALEN wraps and tapes newspaper around dishes before placing them into a box. LYMERE, half-hazardly puts a sculpture in a box.

HALEN

Lymere, be careful.

LYMERE

Huh?

HALEN

The way you're putting your sculptures in the boxes. You gotta be careful.

LYMERE

I am.

HALEN

No, you're not. You don't want to wrap them?

LYMERE

It's not that serious.

HALEN

Uhh--Since when has your art not been important to you?

LYMERE

I'm not saying that.

HALEN

Maybe not with words, but the way you're tossing them around... Look just, just take some of this newspaper. I have more than enough to wrap these dishes. Here, take...

LYMERE

Nah, the ink from the paper... I'm not doing that.

A beat.

Halen

Okay, it's too early for this to be the vibe, so I'm just going to say it... You can't be mad at him.

LYMERE

Uh, *yeah* I can. And I'm a'ight with that. I'm mad at him.

HALEN

He's in a tough... tough spot. I mean, he subletted to us, no deposit...

LYMERE

And we paid him, on time every month for the last, never was late, three years rent on time.

HALEN

The man has a family.

LYMERE

We're a family.

HALEN

But it's *his* apartment.

Lymere

WHAT... Let's just... (*exasperated*) let's just not.

Silence. Lymere continues packing, trying to conceal anger but not doing a good job at it.

The sound of a firecracker!

HALEN

Oh my God! Why are they setting off those loud ass firecrackers this early in the morning?!

Lymere doesn't respond.

Another firecracker!

HALEN

What the hell?! Why do they always have to do this the *day* before the holiday? They can't wait a few more hours until it's officially July 4th?!

Lymere doesn't respond.

HALEN

(quietly to self) Glad growing up in Trinidad I didn't have to put up with all of this.

Halen stops packing and just looks at him.

HALEN

Okay, so now you're not talking to me? We can't just talk things out?

Lymere stops packing and takes a deep breath.

LYMERE

We just tried. It's not working. We got these boxes to pack, so I don't want to talk anymore.

LYMERE

Not right now.

HALEN

Oh, come on!

HALEN

Don't do this.

LYMERE

Babe

HALEN

Lymere!

LYMERE

Respect my wishes.

LYMERE

Please!

HALEN

No!

LYMERE

I'm respectfully asking...

HALEN

No, Lymere.

LYMERE

Halen, baby please?!

LYMERE

Please please.

HALEN

NO WAY!

A beat.

HALEN

We have to **communicate**. **Key** to a good marriage.

Lymere walks over to a table, grabs his keys.

HALEN

And you're picking up your keys. Put'em down.

LYMERE

I'll be back.

HALEN

Really? You're *really* going to walk out like that?

LYMERE

You want me to pick up the U-Haul or what?

HALEN

You said they don't open until 10 uhh It's 7:30.

LYMERE

The one in the Bronx, on Grand Concourse, opened 30 minutes ago.

HALEN

So, you're going to walk all the way up there?

LYMERE

I'll catch the train.

HALEN

I thought you were all paranoid about "Rona".

LYMERE

Alright, I'll walk.

HALEN

From 136th all the way to Grand Concourse?

LYMERE

It's not that far.

HALEN

Hmm... I wouldn't be walking all the way from Harlem to the Bronx. It's *blazing* outside.

LYMERE

So, I just can't do nothing right, huh?

HALEN

Your ass has been on your shoulders since we got out of bed. What the hell is the matter with you?

LYMERE

I'm trying to sidestep *this*.

HALEN
Talking?

LYMERE
Arguing.

HALEN
We can talk without arguing.

LYMERE
No! Not if you're telling me how to feel.

HALEN
Alright, fine! Be mad at him.

Lymere takes a slow deep breath.

LYMERE
Okay, *please* listen, when you tell me that I can't be mad at him and then turn around and say in that smart ass tone to be mad at him, you still not respecting how I feel.

HALEN
Okay, -- *cool*,-- then what would you like me to say?

LYMERE
I want you to say nothing.

HALEN
I'm not doing that.

LYMERE
See.

HALEN
Okay. Listen. I'm having your baby next month. We've been together **seven** years, so don't act like you don't know me well enough to know that I'm only trying to make the best **OUT OF A FUCKED UP SITUATION?!**

LYMERE
And what do you think I'm trying to do?

HALEN

Forget it.

LYMERE

Oh, so now you *don't* want to talk?

A loud banging sound!

LYMERE

GODDAMNIT!

HALEN

I told you to not turn on the air conditioner. It's been acting funny for weeks!

LYMERE

It's 90 degrees. Where's the remote?

HALEN

I don't know. Just go over and unplug it.

LYMERE

I know that it'll work if I use the remote to turn it off and then back on.

HALEN

That doesn't even make sense.

LYMERE

But it works. Where's the remote?

HALEN

I told you, that I. don't. know.

LYMERE

Did you pack it up in one of these boxes?

HALEN

Lymere, just walk over to it and just...

LYMERE

Halen, baby, just help me look for...

HALEN

That banging is giving me a headache.
You know what...

Halen walks over and unplugs the air conditioner. A beat.

LYMERE

Why you unplug it?

HALEN

It's too early for all of that noise.

LYMERE

I was going to fix it.

HALEN

Mhm... I've seen you try that remote trick before. It *never* works.

LYMERE

It does.

HALEN

No, it doesn't.

LYMERE

I'm telling you since the start of the summer everytime I use the remote...

HALEN

Nooo it doesn't! I've seen you do it and it never.....

Halen feels a sharp pain. She tries to avoid making a sound but can't help it, as she touches her belly

Lymere notices, rushes over to her.

LYMERE

Babe, you alright?

HALEN

I'm okay.

LYMERE

No, you don't look....

HALEN

I'm alright I'm alright I'm alright. .

LYMERE

Alright, come sit down.

Lymere assists Halen onto the couch.

HALEN

Stop with the screw face. I'm alright.

LYMERE

You sure? We don't need to go to the hospital?

HALEN

Lymere...

LYMERE

Halen, I'm serious, something could be wrong with the baby. Look, we could walk real slow over to Harlem Hospital.

HALEN

Babe, I'm alright, and with all of this Covid stuff that's going on, at all of the hospitals, I don't need to be in one unless it's absolutely necessary.

A beat.

LYMERE

Yeah, you're right.

A beat.

HALEN

Come, sit with me. Please?

He sits next to her.

HALEN

Give me a kiss?

He gives her a kiss.

HALEN

You okay?

LYMERE

Don't be worried about me. I'm worried about you. I'm worried about the baby...

HALEN

We're fine. We're *all* going to be okay.

LYMERE

This crazy as hell, just trying to figure it all out.

HALEN

I'm going to figure it out with you.

LYMERE

Yeah, I know. You always do. You my ride or die.

HALEN

(Chuckles)

I already told you, I'm not dying for anyone.

LYMERE

Oh, so now you not my ride or die?

HALEN

I'm just your ride. Forget that die shit.

They laugh. A beat.

LYMERE

You know legally he can't do anything.

HALEN

You're the one that's always talking about truth. Okay? We gave him our word.

LYMERE

Yeah because we thought we'd have those dumb ass stimulus checks.

HALEN

That's not his problem.

LYMERE

Yeah, but we don't have anywhere to go.

HALEN

You have a place. I have a place.

LYMERE

A shelter's not a *place*.

HALEN

It'll be a roof over our heads.

LYMERE

Yeah, roofs. Plural. Us not being together.

HALEN

It's just temporary.

LYMERE

Look, I gotta tell you....

A beat.

HALEN

What? What...

LYMERE

It's about... well...

A beat.

HALEN

Just tell me, Lymere. You know you can say *whatever*.

LYMERE

It's just that... I mean what happens when it's time for you to give birth? Like what if it's the middle of the night, and...

HALEN

Stop stop stop. These are the cards we were dealt. We play'em our best.

LYMERE

If that's really the case then we stay right here.

HALEN

You would do that? Laith is like a brother to you.

LYMERE

If he was being brotherly he wouldn't be kicking us out. I swear these past ten years, since he married Shoshana, every year he's changed. And not for the better. And she's just a hater. For some reason she never liked me.

HALEN

For some reason? She remembers the days when y'all were wildin' out at clubs, chasing thots.

LYMERE

Well, she needs to get over that ancient ass history, and I need you to come around.

HALEN

Okay, okay listen, tomorrow's the day for explosives. Not today.

(a beat)

We told him we'd be out Sunday. We keep our word? Hm?

LYMERE

There's no way in hell you could think that you in one shelter and me in another is what's best for us. And those places have to be hot spots for Covid.

HALEN

Will you stop! We have two hundred dollars to our names, less when we put this stuff in storage.....

Look, it's our only option..... During the day we'll hang out with each other. Look at me, babe. *Lymere*, please?

He looks at her.

LYMERE

Alright

HALEN

Thank you. This is only a temporary setback. We'll be...

*A **LOUD** blast of the song "Fool's Paradise" by Meli'sa Morgan.*

LYMERE

OH MY GOD!!

HALEN

Baby, calm down.

LYMERE

I'm going to fucking kill her!!

HALEN

Lymere...

LYMERE

Every fucking morning!

Lymere heads to a window.

HALEN

Get away from the window.

Old lady (OFF/SINGING)

I'm taking out this time

LYMERE

I'm tired of her shit!

OLD LADY (OFF/SINGING)

To give you a piece of my mind

He opens the window and sticks his head out of it.

HALEN

Babe, don't.

LYMERE

TURN THAT THE FUCK DOWN!

OLD LADY (OFF)

FUCK YOU!!

LYMERE

FUCK YOU!! IT'S TOO FUCKING EARLY...

OLD LADY

FUCK YOU FUCK YOU!!

HALEN

LYMERE, STOP!

LYMERE
TURN THAT SHIT DOWN **NOW!!**

OLD LADY
FUCK YOU!

The music suddenly stops. Silence.

LYMERE
We're not leaving.

(music plays)

2. Saturday, July 4th, 2020. Late evening. Lymere is on his cell phone. The air conditioner is on.

LYMERE
Yes, everything is fine. Yeah, yeah we're still coming. End of August... The reason I'm calling, I woke up from a nap and Halen's gone. Has she called you today?... Nahnah, I bet she'll be back soon. Yeah I worry too much, just being the over-protective husband, you know... Yes, ... yes, yes.... I'll have her give you a call as soon as she gets in... Yes, I will make your daughter call you. ...
(chuckles) You know I'm going to obey my favorite mother-in-law... Nah, I got another one in Detroit... Haha, you know I'm just kidding.

A loud banging sound! The air conditioner, again.

LYMERE
SHIT!! I'm sorry, ma... Ma, ... can.... I, I'll call you back.

Lymere hangs up. Looks for remote.

LYMERE

Where the fuck is that remote? SHIT!!

*He unplugs it. Silence. He then dials a number.
Phone rings and the voicemail message picks up.*

HALEN (OFF/voice mail)

This is Halen, and I'm not available. Leave a message.

LYMERE

Babe, I been calling your phone for two hours... Look, hit me back or shoot a text so I know you're alright. I just want...

A knock at the door.

LYMERE

I guess this is you at the door. Forgot your keys?

Lymere hangs up. He opens the door. LAITH is at the door. He wears a mask.

Laith

What's up, brother?!

LYMERE

(dryly) What you doing here?

LAITH

Uh, no "What's up, brother?!" back? No, welcome back to Harlem I haven't seen you my brother, Laith, in three years? No, it's really good to see you and I missed you? No, come inside my brother from another mother since kindergarten? None of that?

LYMERE

Sorry, I'm not in the most flowery mood. I'm kinda in the middle of packing up my life.

LAITH

That mean I can't come in?

LYMERE

It's your place.

Laith enters. Lymere closes the door.

LYMERE

I guess I should follow your lead and put on a mask.

Lymere puts on his mask.

LAITH

Of course you got one of the flyest ones I've ever seen. Who is that picture of on yours?

LYMERE

It's Edmonia Lewis. Famous sculptor.

LAITH

That's lit.

Silence. The noise of the city is all that is heard.

LAITH

I guess I should just cut to the chase.

LYMERE

About?

LAITH

About how infrequent our texting has been since I told you that me, Shosh, and the girls are moving back.

LYMERE

I've been busy with Halen being pregnant and all, and I've been working.

LAITH

I thought you got laid off.

LYMERE

On my sculptures. I didn't get a Bachelors from NYU to dispatch taxis at JFK for the rest of my life. Shit, I'm glad I got laid off.

LAITH

Yeah, that's what Shosh said after she lost her job. She was like, "Fuck that Executive Assistant shit." (*chuckling*)

(*a beat*)

Man, I'm Glad you been working on your art. You been a dope sculptor since we were kids.

LYMERE

Yeah, I wish I had the business part of your brain that does math and shit.

LAITH

Nah man, it didn't do me any good. Still had my position eliminated, and after dedicating 5 years man... Couldn't crunch enough numbers to pay the rent. Shosh was like, "I told you we should have bought a house," but I was like, man "Fuck Houston, bro! Harlem is our home." I told you when we first moved that we were definitely coming back. Just never thought it would be this way.

LYMERE

I guess NYU should have had a class for us called, "How to keep your job in a pandemic."

They chuckle. The loud siren of an ambulance blares.

LAITH

Damn, listen to that.

LYMERE

Yeah, with the hospital being so close we hear that all day everyday. It's crazy.

LAITH

Yo, speaking of NYU, how is Halen's classes going? She teaching on Zoom?

LYMERE

Nah, She not teaching. She did in the spring, but not enough students enrolled for the summer, so none of the Adjuncts got work.

A beat.

LAITH

Bro, you know I would never give you 30 days notice and try to move back in the spot if I wasn't in a bind.

LYMERE

Well, *as you just heard*, you're not the only one facing challenging times.

LAITH

Yeah man, I know, I know. And I know you guys staying with your Uncle Ricky isn't ideal, but...

LYMERE

Yo, we don't have to go over all this.

LAITH

Nah, I'm just saying that I understand how hard it must be to have to move in with him. How long is he letting yall stay?

LYMERE

Does it matter?

LAITH

I just want to make sure yall are good bro. I was relieved when you told me that he was opening his home to you.

LYMERE

I bet you were.

LAITH

Yo man, what's up with that?

LYMERE

I mean, you said it.

LAITH

Yeah, but I'm sure you know *how* I meant what I said. Bro, what do you want us to do, sleep under the Brooklyn Bridge?

LYMERE

Yo, don't come over here saying foul shit.

LAITH

I'm just trying to understand this attitude you got. We have no place to go! I know moving to Queens isn't ideal but at least you have your Uncle to stay with.

LYMERE

You got your parents.

LAITH

They're in Yemen fam; a place me and my girls have never lived.

LYMERE

Yeah, why go live with your retired parents when you can kick me and my pregnant wife out. And when we've never missed a rent payment. Most folks in the city stopped paying their rent, city told them they didn't have to, but we continued paying ours. We continued paying *you*.

LAITH

You act like I was making some kind of profit! You pay me, I pay the management company. I've never made a single penny from subletting to you.

LYMERE

You sure?

LAITH

Really, bro?! What, I'm a money hungry Arab? Really, bro?

LYMERE

Stop, bro'in me, yo... and don't go there with racism.

LAITH

Alright, so so, now we're not brothers?

LYMERE

How many times did white boys try to jump you after 9/11, and I would fuck them up for you?

LAITH

Okay, you know, sorry I didn't do this when I was 12, so why don't you take down your pants now so I can plant my lips on your ass.

LYMERE

Yo, fuck you man! You come in here talking all this brother shit, but when the cops would stop me, at the train, go all through my bag, you'd sit there quiet as a fucking church mouse.

LAITH

What did you want me to fucking say!?

LYMERE

You needed to have my back, but you didn't. Didn't have it then and **DON'T HAVE IT NOW!**

Halen enters. She wears a mask.

HALEN

HEY! What the hell?! Bad enough that everyone has to cover their faces with these stifling ass masks, but now with the way you two are yelling we're gonna need earplugs too..... (*breath*) Hi, Laith.

LAITH

Hey. Good to see *you*, Halen.

HALEN

You too. Where's Shoshana and those two beautiful girls?

LAITH

They're at the hotel. In Jersey, over by the G.W. Bridge. Been there since we got in.

LYMERE

It's getting dark, you should get back to your fam. Kiss your girls goodnight.

LAITH

The one thing you've said that I can agree with. What time you heading to your Uncle's tomorrow?

LYMERE

I'll text you to let you know.

LAITH

Yo man, It'd be nice to have some idea of what time I can get the keys and be able to move in.

LYMERE

I said I'll let you know.

LAITH

When will you let me know?

LYMERE

In the morning.

HALEN

Babe, we should have all of our stuff out by 3, you think?

LYMERE

I honestly don't know.

LAITH

Well, man can we say that I'll come by and grab the keys at 3?

LYMERE

I said I'll text you in the morning man, that's not good enough?!

LAITH

....cool.....I'll look out for your text. You both have a goodnight.

Laith exits.

HALEN

(sigh) You told him we're going to your Uncle's?

LYMERE

He doesn't need to know all of our business.

HALEN

Wooooow! Long as you two've known each other, he probably knows more business than me. And why we still have on these masks?

They take off their masks.

LYMERE

Right. *(deep breath)* That's much better. And where you been? I woke up almost 2 hours ago and you were gone. And you weren't answering your phone or responding to my text. I was so worried that I called your mom in Trinidad. She wants you to call her. Halen, where you been?

HALEN

I went to do what you refused to do yesterday.

LYMERE

I tell you we're not moving, and you go get a U-Haul?

HALEN

If you were serious you would have told Laith tonight.

LYMERE

Oh, I can tell him now if you want. I'll call him and tell him right now. Only reason I didn't is because I want you to agree before I say anything. So?

HALEN

You *sure* this is what you want to do?

LYMERE

We can't risk you and the baby getting Covid. Alright? People are in and out of those places. Baby, you gotta trust me. As soon as one of our checks show up, we stick to our plan, buy tickets and go stay with your mom. That's when Laith and'em can come get this apartment back. Tell me you trust me?

HALEN

Always..... We'll...we'll stay.

LYMERE

It's what makes the most sense.

HALEN

You're right.

Fireworks go off outside the apt.

LYMERE

Looks like dudes in the neighborhood still doing their thing with the fireworks.

HALEN

Yeah, making all that *damn noise*.

LYMERE

Want to go to the roof and watch'em?

HALEN

You ask me that every year. You *know* I hate those things.

3. Sunday, July 5th, 2020. Evening. Lymere and Halen are in the apartment. The air conditioner is on.

LYMERE

You coming with me to return the U-Haul?

HALEN

Babe, you should *at least* text Laith.

LYMERE

Last night we agreed...

HALEN

I haven't changed my mind.

(a beat.)

That doesn't mean that what we're doing is right. I mean, Laith and I have always been cordial. I feel bad. Okay, You could *at least* send him a text.

LYMERE

I'm not sending him anything that he'd try to twist in court.

HALEN

Court!? What are you talking about?

LYMERE

I know how dude is. He'll try to sue us.

HALEN

Oh wow, this is a lot.

LYMERE

Yeah, this whole situation..... it's on me. Man I should have been saving.

HALEN

Lymere, don't. You're going to make me quote C.L.R. James to you once again?

LYMERE

It's just that I coulda...

HALEN

..."The cruelties of property and privilege are always more ferocious than the revenges of poverty and oppression." Lymere remember when we met and all the times I'd be **broke**, you'd tell me to meet you at some restaurant, you'd buy me a meal? You're not going to beat yourself up for not being rich.

Silence.

LYMERE

It'll be 7 o'clock soon. We should get the U-Haul back.

HALEN

What are Laith and the girls going to do?

LYMERE

He'll be alright. He's not broke.

HALEN

They lost their jobs.

LYMERE

He'll figure something out. I know he can have his parents Western Union him something from Yemen. Don't worry about dude. He's not worried about us.

HALEN

He's not worried about us because *you* told him we're going to stay with your Uncle Ricky.

LYMERE

Can we not?!

(a beat)

We need to get the U-Haul back so we're not charged for an extra day. You coming?

HALEN

I really just want to lay down.

LYMERE

They're not going to trip if I return it without you?

HALEN

I don't know... you know what, let me just go with you.

LYMERE

You don't have to.

HALEN

Nahnahnahnah, let me just come. Should we turn the air off?

LYMERE

Nah, leave it on. It's hot. We'll want to walk in to a cool apartment.

HALEN

Alright, but add a high ass Con Ed bill to our list of debts.

LYMERE

Fuck Con Ed.

HALEN

Heeey, stop cussing around the baby.

LYMERE

(talking to her stomach)

I'm sorry my baby baby, my booga booga booga boo.

HALEN

(laughing)

Boy, get away from my stomach and let's get this U-Haul back.

LYMERE

(talking to stomach)

My booga booga booga booga boo!

HALEN

(laughing)

You are so silly.

LYMERE

(singing)

And the joy of my world is in Zion! Booga boo...And the joy...

(to Halen)

Sing it with me, babe.

HALEN

Lymere Callaway, stop playing! and let's get this truck back.

They laugh.

LYMERE

Aightaightaightaight, Mrs. Callaway!

HALEN

MmMMmmMm, my last name is Hambry, sir. Get it right. **Halen Hambry.**

LYMERE

Alright, alright, alright, but the baby getting my last name and *only* my last name.

HALEN

Nope! Already told you it's going to be Hambry-Callaway or Callaway-Hambry.

They laugh.

LYMERE

Stop playing and come on. I'm singing all the way to U-Haul though.

They head to the door.

HALEN

(laughing.)

Aw man, You are such a clown. You got your mask?

LYMERE

Yep, right here in my pocket.

(singing)

And the joy of my world is in Zion!

HALEN

Lymere!

LYMERE

I'm just getting warm girl.

(singing) And the jooooooy of myyyyy world!

HALEN

Oh no not the key change!

They exit. We hear the sound of sirens. We hear the front door being unlocked. Laith, wearing a mask and holding keys, walks into the apartment. He pulls out his cellphone. He dials. We hear ringing for awhile.

LAITH

Hello, I'm calling to see if I can get..... What?... Oh, hold on,... let me take this off... you hear me? Hi, I'm calling to see if I can get one of your locksmiths to come out to my apartment... I need to change the locks... Yeah, front door... Oh, sorry, my name's Laith Haidera... that's um H A I D E R A... yeah the address is 112 West 136th Street, between uh Lenox and Adam Clayton Powell. Apartment B... Yeah ...yeah yeah, I'll have on a mask, but I can be in another room while you're changing the locks...

Halen enters, wearing her mask.

LAITH

...Yeah... Yeah... Okay, but how soon can you get....

HALEN

What the hell are you doing here?!

LAITH

Yo, I'll call you right back.

Laith hangs up the phone.

HALEN

You're not going to answer me, *and* you don't have on a mask!

LAITH

I'm putting it back on now.

Laith puts it on.

LAITH

You said you were going to text.

HALEN

I didn't say that!

LAITH

You know what I mean. Lymere said it...

HALEN

Were you... talking to a locksmith?!

LAITH

Yall didn't text...

HALEN

So, so, you're about to have us locked out!?

LAITH

...and you didn't call, and you know me, Shosh, and the girls...

HALEN

Oh, that's some foul shit!

LAITH

Nah! What's foul is is you all not trying to leave. Look at all these boxes. You didn't move a single thing.

HALEN

You don't know that!

LAITH

I got eyes, Halen. I was just here yesterday. Same amount of boxes, and I saw yall pull off in the U-Haul.

HALEN

So, you're stalking us!?

LAITH

No, I came through expecting to see you all loading the truck. I was even going to help, but in 2 hours I didn't see any moving!

HALEN

2 HOURS?!! REALLY, LAITH!! 2 HOURS?!!

LAITH

DIDN'T SEE A SINGLE BOX. DIDN'T GET A TEXT. DIDN'T GET A CALL!

HALEN

Oh, so, you sneak in, and hit up a locksmith, yo if I didn't come back to pee...

LAITH

... yo Don't try to switch this around Halen....

HALEN

...Oh, WOW!! Lymere was right about you not being a friend....

LAITH

...I am a friend...

(they continue to shout over each other)

HALEN

And I'm up here trying to defend you...

LAITH

I am a friend. I been nothing but a friend....

HALEN

... trying to tell him that you're intentions are good and that we'll be alright at the **shelter** when you're just a ...

LAITH

...I subletted to yall, no deposit, made no profit because that's what friends do!

LAITH

Shelter?

Silence.

LAITH

What are you talking about a shelter?

Silence.

LAITH

Lymere said yall were going to his Uncle Ricky's.

HALEN

Don't worry about us.

LAITH

Halen, are yall going to his Uncle Ricky's?

(a beat)

Yo, we're supposed to be friends.

HALEN

Laith...

LAITH

Yo, we're like family. Come on. Halen, tell me please?

A beat.

HALEN

His Uncle Ricky moved to some senior citizen community in Arizona. Okay. We don't have an option outside of..... We're waiting on our fucking stimulus checks to buy tickets, go to Trinidad to stay with my mom until times get better... there.

LAITH

Why didn't he tell me?

HALEN

I don't know... Pride... You men. *Fucking* patriarchy!

LAITH

Yo, I wish he woulda... Yo, he knows that I would never let him go back to one of those...

HALEN

Back? What are you talking about *back*?

LAITH

Wait... he didn't...?

HALEN

He didn't what? Laith, what the hell are you talking about?

LAITH

Halen, I... I don't want...

HALEN

Ahhahah... You better talk to me.

Lymere enters, wearing a mask.

LYMERE

Bae, what's taking...

(a beat)

Man... what are you doing here?

Silence.

HALEN

Babe...

LYMERE

What is he doing in here?!

Silence.

LYMERE

So you both going to stand around being silent?

HALEN

I told Laith that we're not going to Ricky's. I told him our original plan.

LYMERE

Why would you do that?

HALEN

Well we were going back and forth and I let it slip. Then he let something slip. Something I'm surprised you haven't told me.

LYMERE

I don't know what you mean.

HALEN

OH... fine fine fine, we don't need to have this conversation when we're in the presence of company.

LYMERE

Nahnahnahnah, it sounds like you *implying* something about me.

HALEN

Oh, Lymere no...

LYMERE

You talking to me like I'm some kind of shady ass dude...

HALEN

....Ooooh you don't do this....

LYMERE

So, get it out. Speak your mind.

HALEN

Okay, fine! You been in a shelter before?

LAITH

I'ma leave and let yall...

LYMERE

Yo, now you wanna leave after you opened your **big ass mouth!**

HALEN

It's something that I should have known anyway!

LYMERE

What, I was supposed to roll up on our first date like, "When I was 13 my dad died and my mom was unemployed, and we couldn't make rent, and my Uncle

Ricky had a bunch of folks staying at his house, so me and my moms lived in a shelter." ...Is that what you wanted me to say!? Or-or-or should I have started with when I was 17 and my mom got sick and died and I had to go back? Huh?
How should I have told you?

A beat.

HALEN

Nah, you are not about to do this.

LYMERE

Do what?

HALEN

I'm not going to let you or let your anger and pain hurt us. You know we're a team and that you can tell me *anything* and I'll have your back. You know that. Right?..... uh **Right**, Lymere?

LYMERE

I do.

A beat.

LAITH

Bro, you know I'm not letting you go back. I told you when we were 17 that I never want to see you back in one of those...

LYMERE

You don't have to worry about me.

LAITH

Yo, but I do. Just like you used to worry about me... Let me have your back now.

LYMERE

Man, what are you talking about?

LAITH

I don't..man....

(Takes a breath.)

You and Halen take the couch, man, and me and the girls will share the bedroom.

LYMERE

You don't have to do that.

LAITH

I know what I don't *have* to do.

LYMERE

It's only one bathroom in here.

LAITH

We'll make it work man and... it won't be forever.

A beat.

LYMERE

What is Shosh going to say?

LAITH

She wouldn't have it any other way.

LYMERE

Really?

LAITH

I-i-ii don't think she would... look man, I might have to do some convincing.

Halen laughs.

HALEN

Oooh That's gonna be some hella convincing.

Her laughter makes the guy's chuckle.

LAITH

If yall wanna stay, I'ma work it out.

A beat. A loud banging sound!

LAITH

Yo, what the hell is that?

LYMERE

The air cond... Hold on. I'll...

Lymere unplugs it.

LYMERE

There. Unplugged. When it starts making that loud ass noise, that's all you gotta do.

LAITH

Gotchyou. Anything else I should know?

LYMERE

Nah.

HALEN

Yeah, there is.

LYMERE

What?

HALEN

So um, the old ass lady, upstairs in apartment E, blasts her music *early as hell!*

Lymere chuckles.

LYMERE

That's right.

LAITH

Okay, got it.

Silence. Then we hear a few pots and pans banging. It slowly but steadily increases from a few to many many many MANY pots and pans banging.

LYMERE

You probably already heard about this or seen it on the news huh.

LAITH

Yeah, for the workers at the hospitals, right?

LYMERE

Yeah, every evening at 7, shift change. Whole neighborhood shows gratitude..... It's a nice reminder for me today.

HALEN

Oh, oh so you realize you been trippin'?!

LYMERE

(Chuckles)

I realize that I'm married to a real one. And I'm grateful for that.

(take a breath)

And yo, Laith,... grateful for you too... brother.

We hear a clap of Lymere and Laith's hands as they give each other dap.

We listen to gratitude for awhile.

LAITH

Ay yo, I gotta tell Shosh something soon, so... yall staying or what?

The sound of gratitude continues to fill the air.

END OF PLAY

♪ *upbeat music playing* ♪

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