

Ear Hustle
"Catch a Kite 7"
May 11, 2022

New York: Since you hung around. But those dreams have remained. And they've turned around.

Rahsaan and Nigel: [humming]

Nigel and New York: Who'd have thought they'd lead you.

New York: Right back where we need you.

Person and Nigel: Yeah, we tease him a lot 'Cause we got him on the spot.

Nigel and New York: Welcome back. Welcome back, welcome back, welcome back.

[playing Welcome Back Song by John Sebastian]

New York: I don't know the words.

[laughter]

Nigel: I just remember the TV show.

New York: Yeah. *Welcome Back, Kotter*.

Nigel: Rahsaan, I've got to say, it's great to see you. Back on the mic.

New York: Back on the mic.

Nigel: It's been so hard with COVID. We were out for it-- I don't know, what is it, 16 months? Then we came back in, and then there was another shutdown.

New York: It's been awful. And it just goes to show how creative Ear Hustle is, they keep going without me.

[laughter]

Nigel: Well, but now we're back, and that's the cool thing. We're back for another episode of Catch A Kite. You want to remind listeners what that is?

New York: Well, a kite is a message sent to the prison like grapevine or underground, however you want to describe it. People send us kites asking about life in prison. And we go around San Quentin, finding people to answer them.

Nigel: Exactly. But this time, we're doing something different. We've got kites going in two directions, this time between San Quentin and a women's prison.

New York: So, you guys got these women on the phone and ask them our questions, right?

Nigel: Yep. And they've got questions for you too.

New York: I'm Rahsaan "New York" Thomas.

Nigel: And I'm Nigel Poor. This is Ear Hustle from PRX's Radiotopia.

[Ear Hustle theme]

Nigel: Over the last few months, we've been talking with a few women at the California Institution for Women, which is located just outside Los Angeles.

New York: And guys here had all kinds of questions for them. And the first one comes from my boy, John Levin.

***John:** My name is John Levin and I've been incarcerated for 13 years. One of the questions I have would be, do they think about men as often as we think about women? That was one question I had.*

Nigel: We gave that one to an incarcerated woman, named Rakeisa Scott.

***Rakeisa:** No, I don't believe that's true. [chuckles] Being straight is like an anomaly in here. It's weird. A lot of women in here, they don't think about men because they're not into men. Most of them have been hurt by a man. They don't want to deal with men. So, I don't think that they think about men half as much as you guys think about women.*

***Alyce:** My first thought was, "Not in your wildest dreams." [laughs]*

Nigel: And here's Alyce Copeland.

***Alyce:** Many of these gals in here have husbands and they have boyfriends and they have significant others on the outside. But when it comes to sex, they partner up real quick in here. Some of them eventually become roommates and end up with interesting romances. But they still have the husbands, and they still have the boyfriends and they still have the significant others. And I watched it happen over and over and over. The guys said, "Well, crap. She's gone for the duration. So, that's the end of that shift." They change their phone numbers, and they're gone, and they come unglued. They're angry as all hell, and they don't want anything to do with men for a long time after that. Again, they look for companionship where they can get it. Or, you've got the women in here that, hey, they let their fingers do the walking. They take care of themselves.*

Nigel: What do you think of Alyce?

New York: I think Alyce is wrong.

[laughter]

Nigel: Absolutely. And luckily, we are going to be hearing from her again later in the episode.

New York: The next question comes from Ear Hustle's own, Tony Tafoya.

Nigel: And, New York, I think we need to give a little context for this one.

New York: So, Nyge, there's this new law in California,-

Nigel: Uh-huh.

New York: -it allows people to transfer to the facility that matches their gender identity, regardless to whatever gender they were assigned at birth.

Nigel: So transmen can now transfer to men's prisons, and transwomen can now transfer to women's prisons.

New York: And here's Tony's question.

Tony: *For all the transmen that are at CIW, do they want to come to the men's prisons?*

Nigel: Here's *Rakeisa* Scott again.

Rakeisa: *I am friends with a few of them. And what they tell me is that a lot of them don't want to get the bottom surgery done, and they won't feel safe being at a men's prison. So, a lot of them don't want to go to men's prison. They can't go up there with a vagina. They cannot go to prison with a vagina. [laughs] They know they're not going to be safe.*

Jackson: *My name is Jackson, and my question is for women who are in for killing an abusive partner, do you think you got a fair sentence?*

Tamara: *Oh, no. We get more time because we're expected to suppress our feelings. It's like, "How dare you? You know better. You're the woman. You're supposed to have it all together. Just do what you've been raised to do."*

Nigel: Thanks to Tamara Hinkel for that answer. And, New York, does it seem to you that women get harsher sentences than guys in here do?

New York: Oh, hell yeah. I have a pen pal in Chowchilla, and there's a couple of female, formerly incarcerated people that I'm in touch with, and I hear it time and time again. Some women are in prison for killing somebody that was abusing them. Sometimes, they get life, life without.

Nigel: Right. And basically, they're there because they were protecting themselves.

Jacqueline: *The lifers are the most gentle people. They're like super soft spoken, for the most part. I mean, I'm just talking about my experience with people.*

New York: This is Jacqueline Herron.

Jacqueline: *But then on the other hand, the people that come in and out of here, like the people who are just here for short sentences are the worst, personality-wise. My heartbreaks for all these ladies here who are lifers, who are here for killing an abusive husband. There's a lot of them. It's crazy.*

Nigel: I don't know, New York. This is a really tough topic. We'll have to explore this more some time.

New York: Yeah, we've definitely got to do like a whole episode on this.

Nigel: A lot of guys inside San Quentin have told me that they think women's prisons are actually tougher than men's prisons. So, I'm wondering, is that really true?

New York: Wait a minute, I thought this was supposed to be incarcerated guys asking the questions. How come you're asking the questions, Nyge?

Nigel: I know, I know. But come on, this is a question guys inside ask all the time. It's almost like this urban legend or something. This idea that women's prisons are just notoriously violent. So, I figured this was our chance to finally ask it.

New York: All right. All right.

Nigel: I had to know.

New York: That makes sense.

Nigel: [chuckles]

New York: Here's Jacqueline Herron again.

Jacqueline: *Men's prison just looks scarier, like on TV, but I don't know what it's like. [chuckles] I know racially, we mix together here, and I've heard that you guys don't. We're friends with each other.*

Tamara: *Men's prisons, from what I've heard from COs, they deal with things, the racial separation and politics, and they're more violent than women.*

Nigel: That was Tamara Hinkle. And here's Alyce Copeland.

Alyce: *Men are capable of being more violent in a physical sort of way. They'll punch you and they'll knock your lights out. Now here, if a woman punches you, you're able to pick yourself back up off the floor. You know what I mean? But the actual mentality that these women have is they're tough. And they're going to do what they have to do to take care of themselves. A lot of them are from abusive backgrounds, and they wouldn't trust you or anyone as far as they could throw them.*

New York: You know, Nyge, there may be more gang politics in the men's prison, but it keeps you safe in a lot of ways.

Nigel: Hmm.

New York: In prison, you need permission to fight.

Nigel: Huh. Uh-huh.

New York: If the shot caller doesn't give you permission, you can't attack a member of your own gang, you can't attack somebody else's gang because it can start a war. You need permission.

Nigel: Okay, that keeps it safer. So, in women's prisons, they don't have that.

New York: They don't have that. So, if somebody wants to smack somebody, they're getting smacked.

Nigel: Permission free.

New York: Permission free.

Nigel: Wow, okay.

New York: It is chaos in there, Nyge. Total chaos.

Joshua: *How you all doing today? I'm Joshua Burton, and I have a question. And my question is, what's the biggest misconception that people have about women in prison?*

Tamara: *I would say that we're weak. And from my 27 years of incarceration, I've seen that women are stronger, we're resilient.*

Nigel: That was Tamara Hinkle. And here's Rakeisa Scott.

Rakeisa: *That we're living in Club Med, I guess, like everybody's just laying around [laughs] and watching TV, big screens and not doing much. I think that's what a lot of people think women are doing.*

Alyce: *When I got to prison, when I was first arrested and all that, the first thing everybody assumed was-- especially because I didn't come to prison until I was 64, they just said, "Oh, I bet I can tell you what you're here for. You wrote some hot checks." And I just said, "No. No, I didn't." [laughs]*

New York: For Alyce Copeland, the biggest misconception came from other incarcerated women who took one look at her and just felt like they knew her whole story.

Alyce: *I think it kind of floored them, because it was actually two counts of attempted murder. They didn't see that coming. Unless you're one of the gals that happens to be standing there, she's got a face full of tattoos, or something like that, but if you look like Grandma Moses, they're just going to sit there and tell you, "Oh, yeah, you're here for something silly." "No, I'm here for the duration." So, I am here for the duration. [laughs]*

Earlone: *You feel that's the duration?*

Alyce: *Oh, I figure I'll die here. Hell, yeah. I was horribly abused as a child, and I was even worse abused by a husband. It just kept trickling on down, and voila, I'm here. But the thing about it is, is most of the women in here are the same way. You can only take so much of that crap, and then one day you blow up. And then, the courts don't know what to do with you. I never raised a hand to my folks, as much as they raised theirs to me. I stuck with the guy I was married to that abused me. I stayed with him for 25 years until he died. I never raised a hand to a single solitary soul, until that bozo touched me. And I did. By God, I shot his ass. But he didn't die. He didn't die. He wasn't even done harassing me and stalking me and all that stuff. It just kept going, and it still has kept going even though I'm in here. But it doesn't matter to them in here. I broke the law, and here I am. When you hear the stories, it's just the same thing, over and over.*

Automated: *This call and your telephone number will be monitored and recorded.*

Alyce: *And I love fireballs. I love the question about candies.*

Nigel: Oh, my God, New York. Checkout Alyce moving right along to another question that we had from San Quentin.

New York: Yeah. In many facilities, we can't have candy with sugar. The concern that the staff seems to have is that sugar is used to make pruno, which is jailhouse wine or liquor.

Nigel: Yeah.

New York: And when men get drunk, fights happen. And so, I guess the concerns are different. When women get drunk, they must just feel all happy.

[laughter]

Nigel: Hmm.

New York: I don't know, they let them have all the sugar, Nyge. That's all I know.

Nigel: Well, this question of that candy that Alyce was responding to, came from our friend, Reggie Thorpe, here at San Quentin.

Reggie: *Out of all the candy that you could buy in the quarterly packages, what's your favorite candy? [chuckles] The reason why I asked that because I look at a package, and I just see those Starbursts and the Skittles, it just it makes me wish that I could eat some of that candy. It's been so long since I ate some of that type of candy. Every time I look at it, I lightweight envy them that they have that choice, and I don't. I miss eating sour Skittles, tropical Skittles, Starburst, peach rings.*

New York: Yeah, the women get all that stuff.

Nigel: Hey, we've got to win in one arena.

[laughter]

Alyce: *Yep, the fireballs, the cinnamon candies. [laughs]*

Rakeisa: *I can't do without my Skittles.*

Jacqueline: *Okay, I'm not a candy person. I'm more of a like cookie, pie, and muffin person.*

Ana: *And my favorite candy, Baby Ruth.*

Person: *Dark chocolate.*

Tamara: *But If I did have to pick, it'd between a Skor bar or a Snickers with almonds.*

Person: *Any kind of like the Dove or the Ghirardelli. Yeah.*

Nigel: New York, how about you? What's your favorite candy? What have you been missing?

New York: Gummy bears.

Nigel: Oh, Gummy bears. They're so cute. What flavor?

New York: They have flavors?

[laughter]

Nigel: They're not just Gummy Bear flavor.

New York: What's your favorite candy? [pause] You have it with you.

Nigel: Not my favorite, but when I'm recording, I love these Werther's Originals.

New York: Ooh. Gold wrapper.

Nigel: Yeah. They have been called Old Lady Candy, but I like them.

[laughter]

New York: What year did they come out?

Nigel: [in an old woman's voice] 1928.

[laughter]

New York: We're going to take a quick break here. And when we come back, CIW sends questions right back to San Quentin.

[break]

Jacqueline: *I'm sure this has been asked before, but here, a lot of people are like "gay for the stay," and all of us wonder if [chuckles] men do that too, and they just don't talk about it. I'm sure nobody probably wants to answer that.*

Nigel: We took this one to our colleague inside, Tony Tafoya.

Tony: *I am Tony Tafoya, Ear Hustle's senior gay correspondent. Thank you, our friend at CIW, for asking this question. It's very interesting, because I think it's a bit different here. The only people I know that are gay for the stay are keeping it on the down low. The only people who would know that they're gay for the stay are the ones that they proposition for sex. Gay for the stay implies that you're having an open relationship with somebody, that it's more about love than sex. And I think in men's prison, it's actually more about sex than love. There are guys who say they're straight, have girlfriends outside of prison, multiple girlfriends, but then still try to exploit their sexual side inside prison.*

New York: *Has this happened to you? Are you speaking from personal experience?*

Tony: *People have made offers, yes.*

New York: *How does it make you feel?*

Tony: *Second class, like I'm only worth pleasuring someone else.*

New York: So, you had a celly, and a lot of people thought because he allowed you to move in or even moved you in, that he's gay for the stay.

Tony: Yeah, it's really interesting because that was, honestly, a safe choice for both of us. Especially after COVID when they kicked a bunch of people out and we didn't know who they were bringing, for safety, we kind of moved in together. And it was actually his wife's idea. Yep. I think that the stigma of gay for the stay actually may have ruined his reputation. He ended up being kind of cut out from his community. They didn't want to eat with him anymore. They didn't want to hang out or play sports or anything anymore with them.

New York: How was living with him?

Tony: It was fine. Probably one of the best cellies I've ever had.

New York: What do you think the percentages of men gay for the stay here at San Quentin?

Tony: Probably about 10%.

New York: 10%.

Tony: Yeah.

New York: This next one, it comes from Tamara Hinkle at CIW.

Tamara: How would you define personal style through your physical presentation?

Reggie: Ooh. How would I define my personal style to my physical presentation?

New York: This is Reggie again. The guy who's really missing those Skittles.

Reggie: I will have to say versatile.

Nigel: What suggests that?

Reggie: My hair.

Nigel: Can you describe your hair?

Reggie: My hair is in dreadlocks. Just a little over five feet now, because I'm six feet, like between 6 feet and 6'1". I looked at a picture the other day, I've seen it looked like my hair was probably like about four or five inches off the ground. I didn't even realize how long it was until I took that picture.

Nigel: Well, while we're talking, your hair's down your back and then you hold it over your lap.

Reggie: *Yeah, I had to wrap it around. Like when I use the bathroom, I tuck it in a turban. That's like the most versatile way that I style my hair, is just putting it and wrapping it up in a turban. A lot of people think is fascinating because they call it a hat. And then, Spanish people say, "Sombrero, nice sombrero." Personally, I call it my crown. That's my halo.*

Thanh: *Everybody always makes fun of me because I wear straight legs. But everybody swears they're skinny jeans. They're not skinny jeans. They're just fitted jeans.*

Nigel: This is Thanh Tran. He works right next door to Ear Hustle in San Quentin.

Thanh: *I think, for me, I would describe my style as I like to be presentable, I like to be clean cut as possible. I like to wear clothes that fit. I don't like the whole baggy look, because when I was into my gang lifestyle, I used to wear baggy clothes, do the sagging pants, and all of that. And as I evolved and I grew, I said, "I want to be the complete opposite of what I used to be." That's why I wear clothes that fit. Some call it skinny, I say clothes that fit. I just like to be presentable, as presentable as possible.*

Jesse: *My name is Jesse Rose, and I've been incarcerated for eight years. How do I define my personal style? I'm kind of like that laid back, kind of country folk dressing type of person individual.*

Nigel: *What do you wear? What do you do with your physical self to show that off?*

Jesse: *Oh. I stay rough and rugged.*

Nigel: I wouldn't say that Jesse spends his time on his clothes.

New York: Yeah, Jesse definitely puts his energy elsewhere.

Nigel: Yes.

Jesse: *So, I grew up with black women, and they're big on hairstyles. So, I mostly grew up with cornrows. At the moment though, I'm sporting some fancy Bay Area triangular dreadlocks. So, the triangular dreadlocks is just dreads that are parted at the root in triangles to form nice, neat patterns. Most guys in prison have dreadlocks that are stinky. And I mean, they're just infiltrated with bugs and lint from the wool blankets. So, usually, I try to keep my hair clean, wash it, do it once a week.*

Nigel: *And do you do your own hair?*

Jesse: *I do actually. I do do my own hair.*

Nigel: *And how'd you learn to do that?*

Jesse: *I learned how to do my hair when I was in juvenile hall, because I realized there was no one was going to do it for me. And I damn sure wasn't going to let no other guy-- I wasn't going to sit between no guys legs. Prior to my incarceration, I used to go into-- women, I sit between their legs and*

they'd do it for me. And then from then, it transitioned to, "Oh, I can get girls by letting them do my hair." When someone looks at me, they're going to say, "This guy's clean and well groomed."

Nigel: *How would you define your personal style through your physical presentation?*

Tony de Trinidad: *Honestly, these days I purposely try to think it about less and less.*

New York: This is Tony de Trinidad.

Nigel: *Why?*

Tony de Trinidad: *Because, in my youth, I was really superficial. I cared about my looks. I would have maybe a good ounce of gel in my hair at any given time. And for me, not for anyone else, if you do that, that's cool, but for me, I just kind of got tired of building this image for what? That's one thing that prison has taught me, that I'm a little grateful for, is to be able to let go of that and just be me. I used to wear baggy jeans. And, yes, I used to sag my jeans and I used to have my grandma-- if I walked into a room, I had to pull up, because if I didn't, she's going to come over and pull them off from me. I wear what's comfortable, and I will never wear skinny jeans.*

Earlone: *So, why are you looking at my pants, man?*

Tony de Trinidad: *[unintelligible [00:25:27] I had to make sure.*

Nigel: *Those are not skinny.*

Tony de Trinidad: *Those are not skinny jeans.*

Nigel: *They're just fitted. They're normal.*

Tony de Trinidad: *They're just really close.*

Nigel: You remember what pants Earlone was wearing?

New York: The tiny white jeans with the air holes.

Nigel: [laughs] They were not tiny. They're what you call fitted.

Why are men in prison so afraid of skinny jeans?

Tony de Trinidad: *I don't think I can get out of--*

[laughter]

Tony de Trinidad: *How do you get in and out?*

Tamara: *In women's prisons, we often form families. Does it happen in men's prisons?*

Nigel: That question also came from Tamara Hinkle. And we had Jesse with the triangle dreads tackle it first.

Jesse: *The bonds that are formed from similar struggles, it just happens naturally. With a little bit of energy, a little bit of effort, those ties are strengthened. So, yeah.*

Nigel: *Do you have a family in here?*

Jesse: *I do. I was a little reluctant to it. But there's guys around who actually want what's best for me and care about what I'm going through the struggles I'm facing. Yeah, I definitely have a family here.*

Nigel: *Do you have like a mother figure or sister?*

Jesse: *In prison?*

Nigel:

Jesse: *Yeah. Oh, my God. What kind of question is that?*

Nigel: *So, what does a mother do? What kinds of words would you use to describe what a mom does?*

Jesse: *A mom is going to be caring, compassionate. I damn sure don't have no mother figure in prison though.*

Nigel: *But couldn't it just be somebody who has cared about you and is compassionate and that you go to when you need advice?*

Jesse: *I think the some of the same qualities that a mother displays are also found in other relatives, such as a brother, uncles, cousins.*

New York: *Do people in men's prison form like family bonds?*

Tony de Trinidad: *Yeah, I would say so. I've had a father figure here before.*

New York: This is Tony de Trinidad. The guy we heard from a minute ago who will not wear skinny jeans.

Tony de Trinidad: *I have a brother figure here. I see it every day. I think that's what gets some people through, to tell you the truth.*

Earlone: *Did you ever have a mother figure here?*

Tony de Trinidad: *I don't even know how to answer that question. [laughs]*

New York: *What does a mother do? A mother nurtures. She guides, protects.*

Nigel: *Loves.*

New York: *Loves.*

Tony de Trinidad: *I've just got to say I have not felt the motherly vibe from anybody in prison. I hope I do one day, that'd be cool.*

Nigel: *Yeah. So, you just described what a mom is like. What does a dad do?*

Tony de Trinidad: *I guess the same thing. Pretty much the same thing.*

Nigel: *A good dad.*

Tony de Trinidad: *So, this question's got me thinking. It's got me questioning my own assumptions, [laughs] because what does a dad do that a mother doesn't or vice versa? I know my situation, there's a big difference. The mother sticks around.*

[laughter]

Jesse: *It was an older brother relationship. Older brother-younger brother.*

New York: *Jesse had this celly once, and it was this guy named Al Watson.*

Nigel: *Mm-hmm. Al Watson, as listeners may remember, from an episode, Chicken on the Bone, spent almost 30 years on death row.*

Jesse: *Most of the time, he ignored me, believe it or not. So, I was always wanting for his attention. I used to always go in the cell and try to talk to him, and he'd ignore me. And he'd be like, "Man, you just want some attention right now." So, I do things. I get up, I talk. Sometimes, I tell a story, a funny story. I'll just recount how the day went. Maybe spread a little gossip. I'll try to bait him in with that. I talk about intellectual things because I know he was big on-- like if it wasn't a meaningful conversation, he didn't want to have no parts in it. I used to come in to the cell clown, just crack a bunch of jokes. And he would sit there and just look at me, like, "You fool, you clown." He was like the older brother who wouldn't let me go and hang out with him, wouldn't let me tag along. When I had him in the cell, I had him then, like he couldn't escape.*

New York: *One time, Jesse did something that he thought Al would never forgive him for.*

Jesse: *The second day after moving into the cell with him, I saw my life flash before my eyes. I was going to do some laundry. Laundry was always been like my stress reliever. I go and do some laundry to relieve some stress. So, as I'm cleaning my laundry, I put the bucketful of laundry and dirty water on top of the bunk, towards the edge of the bunk. And when I jumped on the bunk, my back hit the bucket. Dirty soap hits him directly in his shiny bald head. And I just remember taking a deep breath like it knocked the wind out of me and I was just thinking, "I hope this old dude don't try to fight me up in here because we're going to be here rumbling." He just took a deep breath. He was like, "It's all right, man. That's all right." I was scared, I ain't going to lie. [chuckles]*

Nigel: *Yeah, I would be too.*

New York: You know that question we got about forming families inside prison?

Nigel: Mm-hmm.

New York: I mean, maybe it's not exactly like family, but a lot of guys form really tight relationships in there.

Nigel: Yeah. And I know sometimes it takes a while. But eventually, you do see people falling into specific groups. You know, like the L7s the D&D guys.

New York: Then, you've got your basketball players, like me.

Nigel: Mm-hmm. Oh, the dudes who hang up by the picnic benches, lifting them, bench pressing?

New York: But you know something? No matter what you're into or what you're about, you always find people in here. I mean, they got Wiccans and Rastafarians and Muslims and all kinds of things going on.

Nigel: Yeah.

New York: *When you first came to prison, how did you find what group you belong to?*

Reggie: *People I knew from the streets, people that had experience with being in jails and prisons. My dad and my brother have both been to prison and jail throughout most of my life. So, when I got to jail, I was already accepted because of the pedigree of my brother and my dad. Certain people embraced me, just on the simple fact of my father and my brother. I kept company with them people, regardless of what they were doing.*

In 2009, I got tired, I knew I could do some better for myself. I knew my life was worth more. I just made a decision to change who I started hanging around. I'm starting to hang out and spending time with people that otherwise wouldn't hang out with before I came to prison. Most of them happened to be white.

Because, Nyge, growing up in East Oakland during the 80s and 90s, the people in our neighborhood was black. Only time I seen white people was the police, the fire department, child protective service, teachers, ambulance drivers. I might see a commuter on a freeway every now and then. Other than that, I didn't really see white people. I've been hanging out with people of color most of my life and I just need to go outside of the box.

Nigel: *And what have you gotten by doing that?*

Reggie: *I've established some real good relationships with some incarcerated people. I'm really evolving as a person. I'm proud of myself that I was able to go outside my comfort zone and develop relationships with people that I probably wouldn't have 10-15 years ago.*

Edmond: *I think what's interesting about the bonds that we form inside of prison, it all depends where you're at.*

Nigel: *This is Edmond Richardson. I see him around. He's got those impeccable waves, and he works down here in the Media Lab.*

Edmond: *Coming from Susanville State Prison, those bonds are totally different than coming to San Quentin. In Susanville, a lot of politics, there was like a hierarchy. And I didn't really get close with anybody. It was always mundane conversations, like idle gossip. Coming down here and seeing other guys being vulnerable, tell their stories kind of helped me open up. Like, "How are you feeling? What are you going through right now? What's your dreams? What's your goals? What's your ambitions?" Thanh Tran, he's still here. He's like a little brother to me.*

Thanh: *My name is Thanh Tran and I've been incarcerated for 10 years now.*

There's something about struggling through some of the worst moments of your life that creates a connection with someone that is just not-- you can't emulate that. You can't emulate that on the outside. And I definitely would name one of my closest friends in here, Edmond Richardson. I love this guy to death.

Edmond: *We always go back and forth. We're always arguing and bickering. But I will say he will get upset if somebody ignored my phone call, didn't do something timely, submit something, like he'd get hell upset, and I'm just looking at the dude, like, "Calm down."*

Thanh: *And I feel like Edmond has been here for my worst moments. There was times when I was at his cell door in tears because I felt like I couldn't do this anymore. And he was the one that told me and inspired me. He's like, "Bro, keep going. You deserve to live." Even talking about it makes me emotional, because I just love the guy to death. That's my best friend in the world.*

Edmond: *He always went hard for me, man. I really admire that about him, and that kind of rubbed off on me. I'm outspoken, I hold my ground, and I credit that to him.*

Thanh: *The connection that me and Edmond have created struggling through our worst moments in here, you can't recreate that, absolutely. Absolutely. There's something different about creating bonds in prison.*

New York: Thanks to everyone at San Quentin who was part of this episode, and thanks so much to all the people at CIW who answered and asked questions.

Nigel: And thanks to Katie Turner at Poetic Justice, the writing project that put us in touch with folks at CIW.

Ear Hustle is produced by me, Nigel "Werthers" Poor; Earlonne "Now & Later's" Woods.

New York: Rahsaan, "Purple M&M's" Thomas. John "KitKat" Johnson. Rhashiyd "Sour Patch Kids" Zinnamon.

Nigel: Bruce "Twix" Wallace. And Tony "Smarties" Tafoya.

New York: This episode was sound designed and engineered by Antwan "Mike & Ike" Williams, David Jassy, and Rhashiyd Zinnamon.

Nigel: Additional sound design and engineering by Terence "Lemonheads" Bernardo, Amy "Toblerone" Standen edits the show.

New York: Shabnam "Pop Rocks" Sigman is the digital producer.

Nigel: And Julie "Atomic Fireball" Shapiro is the executive producer for Radiotopia.

Earlonne: Ear Hustle would also like to thank Warden Ron Broomfield. And as you know, every episode of Ear Hustle has to be approved by this cat here.

Sam Robinson: This is Lieutenant Sam Robinson, the Public Information Officer at San Quentin State Prison. And for a minute, I thought we were going to have to back-to-back sex episodes. But then, I kept listening, and it was much more broader than that. They gave a different perspective or an inside perspective about what incarceration is like for our women offenders. And so, it was much more broad than what I initially anticipated with the opening. So, with that, I will say that I do approve this episode.

Nigel: This episode was made possible by The Just Trust, working to amplify the voices, vision, and power of communities that are transforming the justice system.

Earlonne: Don't forget to sign up for our newsletter, The Lowdown, where you can learn more about each episode. In this week's issue, guys at San Quentin answer questions about their favorite books and authors. Subscribe at earhustlesq.com/newsletter.

Nigel: Ear Hustle is a proud member of Radiotopia from PRX. Radiotopia is a collection of independent listener-supported podcasts. Some of the best podcasts around. Hear more at Radiotopia.fm. I am Nigel Poor.

New York: I'm Rahsaan "New York" Thomas.

Earlone: And I'm Earlone woods.

Unison: Thanks for listening.

[upbeat music]

Thanh: *Edmond, you're a champion. You're not a quitter.*

Edmond: *Quitters don't do what they supposed to do. Champions do.*

Thanh: *And you're a star, and you shine-*

Edmond and Thanh: *-every day. That's what you do.*

End of Episode