

Ear Hustle
"Last Memory: Ryan and Earlonne"
June 8, 2022

Mohammed: *I'm Imam Mohammed Fasir and this episode of Ear Hustle contains language that may not be appropriate for all listeners. Discretion is advised.*

Navigator: *Turn left on to Firmona Avenue, then your destination will be on the right.*

Earlonne: *What is this? What street is this? Firmona?*

Nigel: *Firmona.*

Earlonne: *Let's see if the other one up front is Mansel, I think. What's that, Mansel?*

Nigel: *Yeah.*

Bruce: *Oh, Mansel on the other side of the park.*

Earlonne: *Okay, let me see how this looks right here. No, I think this is where we crashed at, right here, if I'm not mistaken.*

Nigel: *Do you want to go to that parking lot right there?*

Nigel: *A few weeks ago, we drove down to LA, to go visit a spot that has a lot of significance in your life, Earlonne. And it's a place that I've heard about for years but I've never seen.*

Earlonne: *Yeah, this is the place where it all went bad.*

Nigel: *Hmm. Do you want to set the scene for us?*

Earlonne: *It was 1997. We were in a black jeep Cherokee.*

Nigel: *I've heard about this Cherokee, man.*

Earlonne: *It was a nice Cherokee. It was my Cherokee, but I had a warrant based on my traffic tickets. So, I was not the driver this night. I was sitting behind the driver in the back passenger seat.*

Nigel: *Mm-hmm.*

Earlonne: *Next to me was my business partner and best friend, Furman Little. I was the godfather of his kids. This dude was a real insightful kind of genius type dude. He was a very important person in my life. In front of him, which is the passenger seat in the front, was my boy, Dion, and the actual driver was Chapelle.*

Nigel: And why were you all driving together, I guess kind of quickly?

Earlonne: Well, we were up to some nefarious activities.

Nigel: *Tell me about your memory here.*

Earlonne: *My memory here is, we came down this one street, Marine, at a high rate of speed. And you see this little street right here, maybe it's a little or maybe they made it littler.*

Nigel: *Firmona?*

Earlonne: *Yeah, Firmona. That's where the driver, I think tried to turn in a Jeep Cherokee at a high rate. And it came up on this curb. I don't know how it hit one of them poles, but it came upon this curb, ran through these bushes and this is where it stopped. [pause] My last memory of that moment was when the car crashed, for some reason, Fermin's door wouldn't open. He was like, "Man, the door ain't opening." I had touched him on his hand, I'm like, "Come this way."*

You know you think this is going to be a chase, you run, whatever, you get away, you might not. But I don't think I was prepared to start hearing gunshots.

I'm Earlonne Woods.

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

[Ear Hustle theme playing]

Nigel: In this episode, just like the one before, we're talking about memories. These really specific memories that people have about something that happened to them before they came to prison.

Earlonne: Yeah. The pre-prison memories are burned in your head, Nyge. You kind of replay over and over again while you're inside. Today, we've got two stories about these kinds of memories, and the first one is mine.

Nigel: Yeah. I don't think you've never told this story in full on this show before.

Earlonne: I don't believe I have either.

Nigel: Earlonne, tell us about these nefarious activities. Can you outline the evening for us?

Earlonne: Ooh. You're going back some years, Nigel.

Nigel: I know. I know.

Earlonne: On December 27th, 1997, me and my partners, we needed a vehicle to do something in, and we decided like, "Hey, here's a nice Suburban, this is what we need." So, we followed this guy home and parked around the corner. Me and my boy, Furman, ran around the corner. And when the guy had got out of his SUV, I crept up on him and I hit him with a football hit.

Nigel: You mean you tackled him to the ground?

Earlonne: But just with my forearm, I just hit him with my forearm. And when I jumped up, I had a gun in my waistband, and I pulled my gun out. When I did that, all the bullets just flew out, the bottom of the clip. Me and my partners, we were like, "Oh, man, let's abandon this."

Nigel: You aborted the mission?

Earlonne: Yeah. We aborted the whole thing, you know what I'm saying? We picked up bullets and me and Furman left. We went and jumped in the car and we were just laughing about what happened.

Nigel: Wait, wait, you were laughing?

Earlonne: It was funny, but you've got to think about it, like, today, I have more empathy, but back then, I was in my criminal element.

Nigel: Hmm. Then what happened?

Earlonne: As we were leaving, I guess they got a make on the car. When we got to this light, it was police there and they shined the light on us.

Nigel: Mm-hmm.

Earlonne: We knew we had a gun in the car. And it wasn't going to go well for us if we got searched. So, we took off. The whole mission was to get rid of the gun and then pull over. But before we can do that, the driver turned a corner doing about 70 miles an hour and we crashed into the bushes. Then, it was nothing left to do but to jump out and run.

For some reason, Furman's door wouldn't open. He was like, "Man, the door ain't open." And I had opened my door and I had touched him on his hand, I'm like, "Come this way." And his door opened. He went that way and then I went my way.

They had helicopters, everything, chasing us and shit. You know the police. As so soon we jumped out and I touched his hand and we jumped out, I started hearing gunshots. As we're running this way, it seemed like they never ended. It was a total of 41 shots fired at us. And out of all those shots, five of them hit Furman, and one hit me. And Furman, he died as a result of his injuries.

The biggest thing I had to do was call Furman's wife and tell her. Everything changed in that moment. There's no way you can process everything. There's no way you can figure anything out. Only thing you

can just say is, like, "Fuck, what was it all for? What was all this shit for? What was all this shit for? What was all this shit for? Why were we on this trajectory?"

Nigel: What was your last vision of-- what was the last thing you saw of Furman?

Earlone: His hand.

Nigel: That was it?

Earlone: His hand and the backside of him because he was trying to get out with this hand, and this hand was sitting on the seat, and that was the last time I touched my boy. That was the last time I've seen him.

In all those years, I probably had one or two dreams about Furman. And the one dream that I remember which was funnier than a motherfucker, he was in heaven and he told me he was writing R&B songs and shit. [laughs] I couldn't compute that, but it was just good to just see him and talk to him. And even though it was a dream, it was just something that I held onto for years.

Ryan: My name is Ryan Pagan. I'm 34 years old. I've been incarcerated for 15 years. Oh, you want more? Okay.

Nigel: No, I was trying to figure out how old you were.

Ryan: I was 19 when I came in. The last memory, it's weird, right? Because it's a good memory that comes from a bad memory. I was on the run for murder. I told my parents to go ahead and let the police know that I was going to turn myself in. And in exchange for doing, that, just let me have one last dinner with my family. [pause]

Nigel: Ryan works down in the media lab near us in San Quentin. I don't know him very well because he hasn't been there long, but when you see him, he's like this, well put together, sort of polite-looking young man.

Earlone: Dapper Dan?

Nigel: Yeah, he's a little dapper. He obviously cares a lot about his looks.

Earlone: Indeed.

Nigel: He presents himself as very professional, put together, soft-spoken.

Ashley: And that's something that I can say that probably never changed. He wanted everything to be nice and clean, no wrinkles. Oh my gosh, his shoes, you cannot touch his shoes. That was his pride and joy.

Earlonne: This is Ryan's sister, Ashley.

Ashley: And then his books. His books will never have a crease. And I asked him, "How do you read them?" I need to have my book wide open, but him it's, just like this wide. He doesn't want to have a crease on the book. He doesn't want to ruin the pages.

Nigel: it's funny because, I mean, that is exactly how he looks. There's no creases.

Ashley: [laughs]

Nigel: I don't know how he's going to deal with aging because he might not like wrinkles when those creases show up.

Ashley: [laughs]

Nigel: What about your sister? Introduce me to Ashley.

Ryan: Ashley is about 5'7". She's light skinned. She also has thick hair. We used to play a lot and I know we used to be rough. We used to watch WWE when it was WWF, and I'd want to try out some moves on her. [laughs] So, I would goad her into wrestling. [laughs]

Ashley: We even had stage names. And if you actually look up there, that's where we would wrestle.

Ryan: Yeah. In the second story, we have a loft and so that was our ring right there, yep. [laughs]

Nigel: And she wanted to know if you remembered your wrestling name. She couldn't remember them. She said you both had wrestling names.

Ryan: [laughs] She said that? I can't believe she told you that. Yeah, I remember. I remember. I think mine was dumb. It was like The Jinx or something like that. Hers, I think it was like Angel or something like that.

Ashley: He would do all of these little sound effects, like he was in a movie. I thought that was funny.

Nigel: When you were really little, do you remember what kinds of sounds you used to make?

Ryan: Oh, I was good at making sound effects for guns, for fighting, for punches.

Nigel: Can you do some of those words?

Ryan: Oh, God. Are you serious? [laughs]

Nigel: Totally serious. Give me a little like there's two people fighting in space sound.

Ryan: *[laughs] Fighting in space?*

Nigel: *Yeah.*

Ryan: *I can't believe I'm doing it. [laughs] Like a fight scene? [makes swooshing]*

Nigel: *Exactly. But now they're not in space, and they're fighting.*

Ryan: *Okay. Just like a regular fight?*

Nigel: *Mm-hmm.*

Ryan: *I think I would use the same noise.*

Nigel: *You wouldn't be like, "Pyooong, pyoong?"*

Ryan: *No.*

[laughter]

Nigel: *That's not fighting in space sound?*

Ryan: *[laughs] -fighting in space sound. [swooshing sounds]*

Ashley: *He was always joking around and just making funny little noises, and dance moves. It was always him that kept the house very live and just bright.*

Dad: *It put a lot of change in our lives without Ryan. It put us a lot of sadness, anger, quietness.*

Earlonne: *Ryan's dad is in his 60s. He just retired after a career in the Merchant Marines.*

Nigel: *I remember I was a little intimidated by him at first, but then he warmed up.*

Ryan: *My dad, he's a big man, maybe 6'1", heavyset. We resemble each other a lot. I don't know how he looks now. What I remember, he always has goatee, a full head of hair. He's not as dark as me. I'm really brown, he's lighter than me. He has a heavy New York accent. He's from Brooklyn.*

Nigel: *And what do you think he said about you?*

Ryan: *"Well, he's a good kid, he just made bad choices."*

Dad: *Don't get me wrong. Ryan's a good son. He's a good boy. Yes. He just made bad decisions. In high school, he was playing football.*

Ashley: Track too.

Dad: He was in track. He likes to compete. He won't give up until he wins. When he graduated, we got him Volkswagen Passat.

Ashley: The slowest driver ever. [laughs]

Dad: So he could go to college. And he was.

Ashley: He was.

Dad: He was going to college.

Nigel: According to his dad and sister, Ryan had been doing well. He seemed responsible. He was on track to become a firefighter. But then, there was a turning point.

Earlone: Ryan started hanging out with a different group of cats.

Dad: Yeah, that's what messed him up. If you would have been okay not getting involved with his friends and all that, he could have been somebody right now.

Ashley: He changed dramatically. He went from wearing the nicest clothes, like his thing was GUESS jeans. He had to wear GUESS jeans, and nice button-up plaid shirt. Again, just always out there dressed to impress. And then he went from wearing khakis, creased khakis, to plain-

Dad: Plain shirt.

Ashley: Driving a nice Passat to now getting his own car, Cutlass.

Dad: And that's when I had a little talk with him. We sat in the car and I say, "You look like you're heading the wrong direction." And he looked at me, he says, "What do you mean?" I say, "The way you dress now, you used to be dressed up like Denzel. Now, you went to homeboy."

Ashley: Mm-hmm.

Dad: So, I tell him, "What's going on here?" And he says, "Nothing going on." And then I told him about his friend. "He's bad news." He says, "You don't know nothing about him." I say, "I don't need to know anything about him. Where I come from back east, we know how to read people. You keep hanging out with these bunch of groupies here, I'm going to tell you you're going to wind up dead, or you're going to wind up in prison for the rest of your life." [pause]

Nigel: In 2007, Ryan and a friend were out at a bar, when they got into an argument with another group of guys. The fight spilled out into the parking lot, and Ryan pulled a gun out of the trunk of a car. He chased one guy, who got away. Then, he shot and killed another.

Earlonne: Before he could be arrested, Ryan went to his family. His dad told Ryan that he needed to disappear for a while.

Dad: *I come from a cop family. All my cousins, my uncles, they're all cops back in Brooklyn, New York. They're all cops. When I heard what happened that day, all I tell my wife, "Get him out of town until we find out the truth," because I know how cops are. They're very intimidating, provoking. They'll write their own statement and make you sign it to confuse my son. And I know that. So, to find out the truth, I sent him out of town. Went and got a lawyer. We hired an investigator. The lawyer told me, "You know where your son is?" "Yeah." "Bring him in." So, I gave him a call and said, "Hey, it's time for you to come back. You've got to face this thing." And he said, "All right."*

Earlonne: Ryan was charged with first-degree murder.

Dad: *I think my wife is the one that asked if he could spend some time with us, somewhere we could eat. Detectives say, "Yeah, it's okay." We went to Applebee's.*

Ryan: *My last meal out there was at an Applebee's. There were police in different booths.*

Nigel: *Wait, what?*

Ryan: *Yeah, it's crazy. Yeah. They were waiting.*

Nigel: *Like, "We are going to escort you-*

Ryan: *Yeah, they agreed.*

Nigel: *-to the restaurant."*

[ambient noise]

Ashley: *We were sitting in a booth. Maybe two booths down, there were two detectives. They were watching us. That felt weird. I can't even recall if I ate because, "Oh, someone's watching us. Someone is watching Ryan." And yeah, it was uncomfortable.*

Nigel: *Were the other customers looking around like, "What the heck is going on?"*

Ryan: *You know what? I was so oblivious to what was going on in the room. I was so focused on my family because I knew what it meant. This is possibly my last dinner with my family. So, it's almost like the whole room was just empty.*

[ambient noise stops] [silence]

Ryan: *I was so focused in on the booth that we were in that I didn't really think about the cops in the other booth. During that whole time I was on the run, I was stressed out, I had all this worry and guilt. And then, I got in that booth, and all that was gone. We were laughing. We were reminiscing on old memories. I just remember it being happy. It felt like there was a bubble. We were all in there, and we just enjoyed the moment.*

[ambient noise]

Dad: *We ate there. We talked. We laughed.*

Nigel: *How did you eat? I mean, I just think I would be so distraught.*

Dad: *Well, he ate. [laughs]*

Nigel: *Do you remember what he ate?*

Dad: *Yeah. He had a burger, I think a cheeseburger.*

Ashley: *His favorite meal, I thought, was that orange chicken.*

Nigel: *He said he thought it was orange chicken, but you said he ate a lot. Maybe he had orange chicken?*

Ashley: *I think I ate the burger too. [laughs]*

Nigel: *Did the time pass quickly?*

Ryan: *It did. I know everyone at our table did everything they can to prolong it, even ordering more stuff.*

Nigel: *Yeah. Was there any part of you that thought this isn't going to happen, when this meal's over?*

Ryan: *Reality didn't really set in until that check was paid and I got up and-- [laughs]*

Nigel: *Ryan has a picture from that night. It's him and his mom pressed up against each other in the booth at Applebee's.*

Ryan: *It's me and my mom, and just me hugging my mom, and we're smiling. I look at it, I'm like, "Man, we look so happy," but I know that there's cops in the other booth ready to take me away. I felt like a child. My mom and my family and I felt protected. I felt nothing bad can ever come between us.*

[somber music]

She wanted to hold my hand or touch me as much she could before I would be taken. That's the last good memory that I have.

Nigel: *Do you remember the last hug? What that was like?*

Dad: *Yeah. I gave him a good hug. I was crying. I admit it. That's my son, and I'm not going to see him. He's not going to be with us here. It was a missing puzzle to this whole family, especially my wife. My wife, she took that very hard and she takes it hard every day. And I hear it from her every day. And that's a piece that was missing out of her heart. Let her rest in peace, but she was hoping that she could see him before she passed away. And I guess not.*

Nigel: *Yeah.*

Earlone: *How long has she been gone?*

Dad: *In two months, it will be a year. She'd passed away in June.*

Earlone: *Have you been back to Applebee's since?*

Ashley: *We go all the time.*

[laughter]

Nigel: *To the same one?*

Ashley: *Yeah, to the same one. My mom, just to still have that piece or that connection with Ryan because that was the last place that we had spent together, we would go to Applebee's a lot. A lot. I know it's just Applebee's, just a restaurant, I know, but when you have a specific memory, that's all that you have, and then you just hold on to it. So, I think we've all held on to Applebee's. And I don't think we could all say one bad thing. Even if they have like the yuckiest food or if their menu changed, I don't recall us even saying, "Oh, Applebee's sucks." No, *[chuckles]* we're just-- Applebee's, stay Applebee's.*

Earlone: *We're going to take a short break.*

Nigel: *When we get back, the two of us head to Ryan's house. And, Earlone, we'll hear more about your story too.*

Earlone: *Indeed, we will.*

[upbeat music]

Nigel: *Ryan's currently serving a sentence of 72 years to life.*

Earlonne: His sister, Ashley, and their dad still live together in the same house where Ryan and Ashley grew up.

Nigel: It's on a cul-de-sac street, and it's like two stories and there's a two- or three-car garage. It was definitely, I'm guessing like a five-bedroom house.

Earlonne: It was like a little mansion.

Nigel: Yeah. And you can tell that it was a house that was meant for a big family, and there were remnants of that everywhere, but there was something diminished about it.

Earlonne: [sighs] Yeah, weren't that many people there.

Nigel: No.

What happened with all of his things? How did you deal with his presence? Everything that was his was here, what do you do--?

Ashley: *We still have some of them.*

Dad: *We still have them. They're up in the attic.*

Ashley: *My mom left everything there for quite some time in the room. She didn't want to change anything. She left it the same way that Ryan had left it. It did take time for her to put stuff away. And maybe that's just when I had Leah. I had Leah when I was 21--*

Dad: *So, yeah, my wife decided to make that to Leah's room.*

Ashley: *[crosstalk] -decided to make that a--*

Dad: *I've got a granddaughter. She needs a room. You can't keep an empty room. Thing goes on, we've got to move on.*

Nigel: *I think not unlike when somebody dies just seeing their clothes and their smell is still there or the shape, they wore a shirt and you can still sort of see the shape of them in it, and you want to keep it, but it also is really painful.*

Dad: *Well, the only thing that my wife got rid of it, all his freaking khaki pants that he had.*

Earlonne: *Oh, I was about to say, I know the khakis was out of there.*

Dad: *Oh, they went in the trash quick. She even got rid of all that white shirts. Any socks, if it's this short fine, but it was this long, white sock, she got--*

Ashley: She would use them to dust the house.

[laughter]

Dad: She got rid of, I say, about a quarter of his stuff that she didn't want to see, because they just gave her bad memories. She loved Ryan. She loved that boy. At times at night, she'd cry for him. And I have to be right there and I was like, "Why you crying? She always tells me, "Nothing." And I always say, "What, Ryan, again?" She says, "Yeah. I really, really miss him." And this goes on every day. It took a part of her.

Nigel: How many years has it been since you've been at that house?

Ryan: 15 years.

Nigel: Do you remember the house?

Ryan: Images of my house that come to me are really from different times and points in my life. I can conjure up at Christmas when my mom bought me a unicycle and I could go back and remember how the house was. And for some reason, I can't even remember the paint or how the house looks.

Nigel: There's a lot of stuff in it. It's definitely full. And in the room that we were sitting in, I was facing the front door and off to the left there was a table.

Ryan: Mm-hmm.

Nigel: And there's some photographs on there. What photographs do you think they have up of you?

Ryan: [exhales] They probably have a photograph of me with them visiting me while incarcerated.

Nigel: Mm-hmm.

Ryan: So, I think that. Maybe a high school picture?

Nigel: Yeah, what high school picture you think they have?

Ryan: Maybe a prom picture.

Nigel: They totally have the prom picture up. What does it feel to know that someone just spent time in your home?

Ryan: It's a-- [chuckles] I don't really know how to explain it. Now that you're here and I know you've been there, it's almost like you're bringing the memories back. I don't really think about home that much anymore. I think because as time moves on, really, for me, to protect myself from not letting the outside or letting my memories affect me in here, I think you end up putting up walls and you block those

memories out. You're bringing memories to me that I've really been blocking out of existence for a long time.

Nigel: *Is it like a bad feeling?*

Ryan: *No, it's actually refreshing because it's been a long time since I really thought about home. So, when you come here from recently being at my house, it reminds me what I need to get back to.*

Nigel: *Mm-hmm.*

Ryan: *Yeah. [pause]*

New York: *I happen to have a question for you, Nyge, actually. The first time you met Ryan, was that interview, what was your perception then and what is your perception now after seeing his home and the other half of his life?*

Nigel: *I thought he was quiet, but like a pretty boy?*

[chuckles]

Nigel: *Like very well-coiffed. He seems nice and genuine. And I was really focused on his hair. He must spend a lot of time on his hair. And he's super polite. And then after going to his house and learning about just growing up and what his family was like, I'm going to be honest, I just started seeing the tragedy of the decision that he made. And God, how many people are in a bad situation and their life could've been so different, seeing how he grew up and the people that cared about him and what his life could have been. So, that's weighing heavy on me. And that applies to so many people I meet in here. But I guess when you meet somebody's family and you're welcomed into their home, it makes the person come to life to you outside of San Quentin. You have a little bit more of an idea of the journey of how they got here. And you just ask, "Oh, man. Couldn't they just have made a different choice?"*

New York: *I feel like I had neighbors that never had a chance. And I feel me and Ryan had a chance. Because of our decisions, we threw our chances away.*

Ryan: *You're absolutely right., because I've had so many chances, I've had so many opportunities out there, and now I'm here, it weighs on you. It weighs on me heavily. I disappointed my mom. I knew she was disappointed, and maybe even somewhat ashamed.*

Nigel: *I don't know how much you want to hear about this, because it's about your mom and how she felt, but do you want to hear it?*

Ryan: *Yes.*

Nigel: Your dad said up until when she passed, she would just cry at night and he'd be like, "What are you crying about?" And she wouldn't say anything. And then, "You're crying about Ryan, aren't you?" Do you wish I didn't tell you that?

Ryan: No, that's something I already knew.

Nigel: Yeah.

Ryan: I felt it. I would think about her constantly. At that moment, when I would think about her, I knew that she was thinking about me. I never really fully processed her passing and I think it's because I'm so far removed from out there, it hasn't really hit me. And I still think that she's there. There's a lot of happiness and there's a lot of pain in that house. Part of me doesn't want to go back. And then, part of me does.

Nigel: Does it almost just seem like another world in a completely different orbit?

Ryan: Yeah, it seems a whole different-- you're right, a different planet. I hate that version of me. I associate that version with the house, with that area. So, I don't even want to think about that.

Nigel: Do you know what happened to your socks?

Ryan: I imagine they'd probably throw them away. They got rid of them or something, I don't know. Are they still there?

Nigel: Your mom used them to clean the house.

Ryan: Oh, cool. [chuckles] I mean, at least they were putting it to good use. [laughs]

Nigel: She used the socks for dusting.

Ryan: Yeah. Well, that's good. Maybe it was just like, yeah—

Nigel: I think it was a combination, like they'll be good for dusting, but also like—

Ryan: I think the symbology is there.

[ambient noise]

Nigel: We're standing on the corner of Firmona Avenue and Marine Avenue in Lawndale. We're standing on a lawn. So, it's a pretty busy street corner all the houses are beige or some tone of beige. I'm standing on green grass, but I noticed that it's pretty muddy. Right behind me is a kid's park. There's children playing on a slide. There's families having picnics over there. Someone's obviously cleaned up the park, so it's actually pretty orderly and neat. And it's nice to see how many kids and families are out here. I really am struck by how many dads are out here. It looks really cheery. A cute little dog just

came by and gave my foot a sniff. [chuckles] But what I really notice are the sounds, it's the children playing.

Nigel: So, E, I'm describing this place because it's a really important part of the memory you were telling us about at the top of the show. You want to remind us where we left off, please?

Earlonne: Well, after our car crashed, Furman was sitting next to me in the backseat and I touched his hand to say, "Follow me." Then all the doors open, everybody got out and ran. And the cops just opened fire. That's all you heard, was gunshots. Five of those bullets hit Furman.

Nigel: But you didn't know that yet, right? Because you were running in the opposite direction.

Earlonne: Right, exactly.

Nigel: Do you see it as a photograph or a film?

Earlonne: It's definitely a film, because it's going to replay. I mean, of course, that moment of me touching Furman's hand can be a photograph. But everything else was in fast and slow motion.

Nigel: And is there sound in it?

Earlonne: Yeah. Sirens, helicopters, gunshots, crash, and a lot of walkie-talkies, them communicating with each other. I think your adrenaline is going so fast that-- I'm serious, even though it's all happening in a couple of seconds, that shit seemed like forever. It seemed like it's just go.

Nigel: And you'd been shot too.

Earlonne: Yeah, I got shot under my armpit.

Nigel: Oh, my God. Was it incredibly painful?

Earlonne: I didn't feel it go in, but I felt the impact of it coming out the front of my chest.

Nigel: I mean, do you actually see it come out?

Earlonne: No. I just felt a force just like somebody just socked me through my back and they hand came out the front of me.

Nigel: Oh, God. Wait, didn't that stop you in your tracks?

Earlonne: No, actually, if I stumbled a little maybe, but I know it made me running a little faster.

Nigel: Huh.

Earlone: *Because I just was like, "How am I still running when I got shot in the back?" That's what's going on in my head as I'm running.*

Nigel: *It's like your body's in denial or something.*

Earlone: *I was in denial. But while I was running, I had a gun in my waistband. And the whole mission was not to get caught with the gun. It was like, "Okay, if the gig is up and you do kill me or whatever it is, you're not going to say because I had a gun in my hand." I know I took the gun out and when I took the gun out as I was running, the toggle laser beam came on because as I was running, I started seeing the laser beam just going everywhere.*

Nigel: *What's the laser beam from?*

Earlone: *From the gun that was in my hand.*

Nigel: *Oh, oh. Your own gun. Where'd your gun end up?*

Earlone: *In that house on that corner, because I threw it through the window.*

Nigel: *There was an open window and you just threw the gun?*

Earlone: *No, it was a closed window.*

Nigel: *So, you threw the gun through this window, broke the glass, and then what happened?*

Earlone: *Then, I ran. I couldn't go one way. So, I ran back towards the front, trying to go around the house the other way. And the helicopter light was on me and the police command point was right there. So, I just kneeled down in front of the truck. And then, I ended up crawling up under the truck.*

Nigel: *Just like belly down on the cement?*

Earlone: *Yeah.*

Nigel: *How long were you there bleeding under this truck?*

Earlone: *Seem like I was under that truck for days, but I know it was probably about an hour. And then, this police dog got all in my business and started sniffing. The dog is what alerted them to me. Dog bit me all up and shit. They dragged me from up under the thing, and a couple of them did the shit they do, the kicks, all that old shit. You're apprehended, but-- yeah, this was it. This is the spot 24 years later.*

Nigel: *Where did your gun end up?*

Earlone: *In that house, on that corner because I threat it through the window.*

Nigel: *We might have to go down there.*

Earlonne: *All right, let's go.*

Nigel: So, we just started walking down the street, alongside the park, and there was the house.

That's the house you think?

Earlonne: *That's the house right there. I don't think, I know.*

Nigel: And it was like a kind of small house with a front porch. There were a bunch of dog carriers out front. It was kind of industrial behind it. Couldn't tell if anyone was home or not.

Do you think it's the same people?

Earlonne: *I don't know. This is right here where the police set up their command post. Right here. You're going to go knock on the door?*

Nigel: *I know.*

Earlonne: *See if the residents are still there? I will.*

Nigel: *If you want to. I'm not [unintelligible [00:41:09] do it.*

Earlonne: *Come on, let's go.*

Nigel: *What are you going to say?*

Earlonne: *I'm going to ask them, have they been living here since 1997?*

[dog barking]

Nigel: *[laughs]*

Nigel: Okay, Earlonne, we decided to walk up to the house, and I had to admit I was nervous.

Earlonne: Was you?

Nigel: Yes.

Earlonne: Why was you nervous about?

Nigel: Because it was just such a crazy thing to do. And you knocked on the door and nobody answered. I was a tiny bit relieved.

Earlonne: [laughs]

Nigel: But--

Earlonne: That did not deter me.

Nigel: [laughs]

Earlonne: I went around to the back of the house, and that's where I found there's one guy who led me to another guy who ended up being the guy who lived there in 1997.

Nigel: Mm-hmm. It was the same freaking guy.

Earlonne: Same dude.

[ambient noise]

Male Speaker: *Yeah, I remember. You threw a gun through the window there--*

Nigel: *Can I record you? You remember it?*

Male Speaker: *Yeah.*

Earlonne: He probably was about like 5'6"?

Nigel: Maybe 5'6". Older gentleman.

Earlonne: Older gentleman.

Nigel: Like workman's clothes, looks like somebody who does manual labor.

Earlonne: They was back there working on some steel. He was just curious what I was talking about..

Nigel: *You remember it?*

Male Speaker: *Yeah.*

Nigel: *Holy moly. Can you tell us about it?*

Male Speaker: *I don't know, I was asleep, but I heard noise, then I heard the window breaking and then I heard the gun getting down to the floor, and I know the gun had a laser.*

Earlone: *And it probably was on too*

Male Speaker: *Yeah, it was on. Good thing that it didn't went off because I was laying down on the floor and the laser ended up pointing up at me. [laughs]*

Earlone: *Ooh.*

Male Speaker: *Yeah. Before that, I heard some gunshots. Good thing I was here by myself.*

Nigel: *No children in the house?*

Male Speaker: *I have children but they were not here. Ten minutes or, I don't know how long, somebody knocked on my door, and it was the police. And then, I gave him the gun and that was it.*

Nigel: *Do you think it's weird? He just walked up here and told you this story?*

Male Speaker: *Well, yeah, but he said he was serving a life sentence. So, how come he's out? [chuckles]*

Nigel: *Well, he was in for a long time.*

[chuckles]

Earlone: *No, I got out about three years ago. While I was serving a life sentence in prison, she was a volunteer in prison, and we created a podcast called Ear Hustle. And the podcast is just about life's inside prison, and now it's also about life outside prison. And while I was serving life, I was probably 20 years into it when Governor Brown commuted my sentence.*

Nigel: *Earlone, at this point, I'm thinking like, "How can this be the same guy?" My mind was blown. Was yours?*

Earlone: *No, I was just like, "Okay, cool. This is going to be interesting."*

Nigel: *You're just rolling with it.*

Earlone: *I'm just rolling, "This is going to be interesting." I haven't seen this dude since the night it all happened.*

Nigel: *He said, "I'm going to go knock on the door." And I was like, "I wouldn't do that," But he did.*

Earlone: *And for your window, man. For your window.*

Male Speaker: *I mean-- [chuckles]*

Earlone: *This is for your window, man.*

Male Speaker: *You don't have to. I mean you probably need it.*

Nigel: *No, he doesn't need it. He's good. You should take it.*

Male Speaker: *I appreciate that. I can buy lunch for--*

Earlone: *Definitely. Definitely appreciate it, man.*

Male Speaker: *Is it a good one?*

Nigel: *It's real.*

Earlone: *[laughs]*

Nigel: *It's real. He wouldn't do that.*

Earlone: *No counterfeit. That life is over, man That life is over. Whole new life.*

Male Speaker: *I'm glad that you're out. I'm glad you're making a good life out of prison.*

Nigel: *You were so nice to talk to us? Why did you talk to us?*

Male Speaker: *That's my nature.*

Earlone: *All right, I will let you get back to work, man.*

Male Speaker: *Yeah.*

Nigel: *Okay, thank you.*

Earlone: *Definitely appreciate you, man.*

Nigel: *Thank you so much.*

Male Speaker: *Okay.*

Earlone: *It was definitely a pleasure. All right, man.*

Nigel: *I'm glad he could pay you back.*

[laughter]

[upbeat music]

[ambient noise]

Nigel: *Did you go over and take pictures?*

Earlonne: *Yeah, of the corner.*

Bruce: *Why did you take pictures?*

Earlonne: *Because this is the place it happened. I might even share with the Furman kids or I might send one to D, or something be like it just looked familiar because I've been out three years now. Your last memories are the most memorable, especially going into prison because they're your last moments being free. And I noticed that over the years, I can mention some shit to friends or family, and they'd be lost They don't have no clue because their minds have a million different memory stacked on top of that because they've been free. But for us, this was it. It was either from this to the county jail and the prison shit. So, you definitely have a fresh memory of your last moments in society. A lot of shit I can talk about, people don't remember, but that shit is clear as day to me.*

[credits]

Earlonne: Well, Nyge, this is the last episode of Season 9.

Nigel: I know. And we're taking a break from putting stories out so we can actually work on new stories for upcoming season.

Earlonne: Season 10.

Nigel: Mm-hmm.

Earlonne: We'll be back in September with a gang of new stories, including guys who lie about their crimes.

Nigel: You mean actual versus factual?

Earlonne: Exactly.

Nigel: [laughs]

Earlonne: And what it's like to be pregnant in prison.

Nigel: I'm looking forward to that one. In the meantime, you can keep up with all things Ear Hustle by subscribing to our newsletter, The Lowdown, at earhustlesq.com/newsletter.

Earlone: While we're gone, we'll be dropping some extras in the Ear Hustle feed, including an episode from a show we've been listening to. And there's one other thing I'm really excited about, Nyge.

Nigel: And I know exactly what you're talking about. The San Francisco Public Library has chosen our book, *This Is Ear Hustle: Unflinching Stories of Everyday Prison Life*, for the 2022 One City One Book program.

Earlone: Woo-woo.

Nigel: Mm-hmm.

Earlone: So, we'll be traveling around town, talking about our book, which should be a lot of fun.

Nigel: Definitely.

Earlone: And, of course, you can learn more about it in The Lowdown.

Nigel: And on our socials, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook @earhustlesq. Earlone, it's sounds like we've got a busy summer.

Earlone: We do. We're going to be doing a lot.

Nigel: [laughs]

Earlone: Ear Hustle is produced by me, Earlone Woods, Nigel Poor, Rahsaan "New York" Thomas, John "Yahya" Johnson, Rhashiyd Zinnamon, Bruce Wallace, and Tony Tafoya.

Nigel: This episode was sound designed and engineered by Antwan Williams, with music by Antwan, David Jassy, and Rhashiyd Zinnamon.

Earlone: Additional sound design and engineering by Terence Bernardo.

Nigel: Amy Standen edits the show, Shabnam Sigman is our digital producer, and Julie Shapiro is the executive producer for Radiotopia.

Earlone: We'd 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: Oh, this is Lieutenant Sam Robinson, the Public Information Officer at San Quentin State Prison. For nine seasons now, I've had the opportunity to weigh in on each of these episodes. All of them have been different, all of them have been special. This one was even more special to me because I got to dive into the journey of someone's return back to the last memory, which is something

I've had conversations with people about, but never have I observed them or had opportunity to see what that experience was for them. And so, you opened that window for us, man. And with that, I'd say I personally appreciate that. I appreciate all nine seasons of Ear Hustle and look forward to what the future holds. So, with that, I will say that I 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.

Earlone: Don't forget to sign up for our newsletter, The Lowdown. This week, we've got Antwan talking about his last memory before he went to prison. You can 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.

Earlone: Some of the best podcasts around. Hear more at Radiotopia.fm.

Nigel: Our studio outside of San Quentin is KQED in San Francisco. I'm Nigel Poor.

Earlone: And I'm Earlone Woods.

Unison: Thanks for listening-

Earlone: -to the Season 9.

Nigel: Hmm, we're going to miss you.

Earlone: [laughs]

[Ear Hustle theme fades away]

Male Speaker: I don't remember the year that happened.

Earlone: December 27th, 1997.

Male Speaker: December 27th? That was my birthday.

[laughter]

Male Speaker: Got scared on my birthday. [laughs]

Nigel: How old did you turn that year?

Male Speaker: I was 42, something like that.

Nigel: Happy birthday.

[laughter]

Nigel: Broken window, maybe you should buy a cake with that money.

Male Speaker: [chuckles] Yeah.

[Radiotopia from PRX]

End of Episode

[Transcript provided by SpeechDocs Podcast Transcription]