

Ear Hustle
"Wishful Thinking"
November 16, 2022

Nigel: Hey there, it's Nigel.

Earlonne: And Earlonne.

Nigel: Just hopping in quickly to say hi to any of those folks who are new to Ear Hustle, and found their way here after Ira's shout out on This American Life.

Earlonne: Good looking, Ira.

Nigel: If you're new to Ear Hustle, and you're not sure where to begin, you can always start at the beginning.

Earlonne: Season 1 was great, although I was still in prison.

Nigel: Yeah, so here's another idea. Check out our list of 10 Essential Ear Hustle episodes we just put together.

Earlonne: Yep. The Ear Hustle staff debated and argued, voted and revoted and came up with a list of 10 episodes we're really proud of, and we think will make a great introduction to our show.

Nigel: You can find those on our website at earhustlesq.com/essential.

Earlonne: That's earhustlesq.com/essential.

Nigel: Happy listening.

[disclaimer]

Judith: *[in a singing tone] Hey, my name is Judith Hill. And this episode of Ear Hustle contains language that may not be appropriate for all listeners. Discretion is advised.*

[onomatopoeia]

Nigel: [laughs] Come on, what is that? That sounds like when sea lions washed up on the beach.

New York: It sounds worse than that. It sounds like sea lions getting beat with billy clubs. [laughs]

Nigel: It's horrible. What the heck is going on? I'm traumatized.

New York: Okay, so check it out. A while back, Nyge, me and Rhashiyd went up to the chapel.

Nigel: Right, as you come in the gate of San Quentin, there's a chapel, I can see that.

New York: Right. And it's a gathering space for a lot of the performances that happen at the prison. We were there to check out something called Musicambia. When we walked in, we saw ten or so musicians huddled up on the stage, some civilians in regular street clothes and some guys in prison blues.

[onomatopoeia]

[background music]

Nigel: This sounds pretty wacky. Are you sure this wasn't an improv class? This is really music?

New York: Yeah, I know, it sounds crazy. But I guess this is how professional musicians warm up.

[background song playing]

Nigel: Okay, so what's the deal with this Musicambia program? How does it actually work?

New York: Musicambia brings in professional musicians from the outside to work with guys in prison.

Nigel: So, these are really professionals?

New York: Yeah. Rha and I were starting to wonder what we'd gotten ourselves into.

Nigel: I bet.

New York: But then, this woman walked up to a mic in the center of the stage and she started singing.

[Judith Hill singing]

Nigel: All right, all right, I can hear this.

Judith: *My name is Judith Hill. I'm an artist from LA.*

New York: *Okay. I don't have the Google and you're being very humble. I need you to tell me who you really are.*

Judith: *Okay.*

[laughter]

Judith: Okay. I'm Judith Hill. You mean you want more detail about like--

New York: Your music career.

Judith: Okay. Well, my music career.

New York: Okay. She's not doing a good job of it, so let me just tell you. This is Judith Hill. She sang with Prince, Stevie Wonder, and Michael Jackson.

Nigel: Wow. Trifecta.

New York: Yeah, she was featured in a documentary about backup singers called *20 Feet from Stardom*.

Nigel: That is such a great documentary.

New York: I wish I would have saw it. A lot of people know her from being a finalist on *The Voice*.

[Judith Hill singing]

New York: Judith Hill had come into San Quentin to be part of this program. And what's cool about the way Musicambia works is that these songs were written by incarcerated guys, working with Judith Hill, and a handful of other professional musicians who come in the prison to collaborate on a show.

Nigel: I love hearing that because you know how sometimes there are musicians come in here and perform for the guys and you can tell they're all puffed up and proud of themselves for coming in and performing in a prison? But this sounds like a collaboration.

New York: Yeah, this was unique.

Nigel: Yeah. Nice.

[upbeat music]

Nigel: New York, I love it when we do these music episodes.

New York: I do too. I always look forward to them. I still remember the first one with Banks and Maserati-E did that Jingle Bell twist.

Nigel: Oh, that was so good. Remember Scoob Stacks out on the yard?

New York: Yeah. And Richie Morris.

Nigel: [crosstalk] Richie Morris.

New York: Yeah, you read my mind.

Nigel: Quentin Blue. Oh, there are so many good performers in here. This time, we're going to hear what one of the guys here at San Quentin cooked up with Judith Hill.

New York: And we're going to hear music from the California Institution for Women.

Nigel: And stay tuned because we have a song from a guy Ear Hustler listeners know well, even if they don't quite realize it yet.

New York: An old school rapper with a new school flow.

Nigel: I'm Nigel Poor.

New York: I'm Rahsaan "New York" Thomas. This is Ear Hustle from PRX's Radiotopia.

Derek: Growing up, my heroes were not like quarterbacks. They were guitar players. Like Jimi Hendrix is right up there at the top. Those cats were just cool. They were just cool.

New York: This is Derek Barboza. And, Nyge, he's my boy.

Nigel: I think I might know why. Is this guy also from New York, New York?
[laughs]

New York: He just happens to be from Red Hook, Brooklyn, just down the BQE from where I grew up.

Nigel: And did he start playing guitar back in Brooklyn?

New York: Nah, he didn't. He went to prison when he was 28 and he's been down for almost 30 years now. And he had actually kind of forgotten his guitar dreams until partway into his sentence, that's when he landed in the SHU.

Nigel: SHU stands for Security Housing Unit. People are put there to separate them from the general population after they've been found guilty of committing a crime in prison.

New York: Yup, and Derek got sent to the SHU for one of the most serious crimes you can do in prison.

Derek: *I killed my cellie.*

New York: *Damn.*

Derek: *My cellie started stabbing me because I refused to stab a rapist and he didn't make it. So, I did a total of eight years in the SHU because of him. While I was in the SHU, I had promised myself to do something I always wanted to do, but never got around to it, from just procrastination in life, is play the guitar. I don't know who wrote the book, but who taught me how to play guitar in prison was *Guitar for Dummies*.*

[laughter]

Derek: *That got me through the basics. And did I feel like a dummy as I was starting out? Absolutely true. I felt like a big dummy because I sounded like, "Ooh." I sounded rough, yo. Be glad you didn't know me back then. Be glad you didn't hear me back then.*

It's frustrating, it's tedious, it's boring, and you sound like crap like forever until you start sounding good. So, a few sweet notes would get me enough to get to the next sweet note and the next. And as soon as I could play a song halfway decent, yo, I wanted another one and another one, and another. And I'm still the same way, nothing has changed.

New York: *Derek kept practicing and practicing. And then about a year ago, he got transferred to San Quentin.*

Nigel: *I think at San Quentin, it's actually pretty unusual in the California prison system in terms of the amount of music programs here.*

New York: *For sure, really unusual. When Derek walked into the Musicambia program for the first time, it pretty much blew his mind.*

Derek: *I've never been a part of anything like what San Quentin has to offer. So, when I came in here, I didn't know what to think. I didn't think it was going to be this. So, I recognized her immediately from *The Voice* because she's one of the finalists. Judith got on the keyboard and sang a song and she just blew the doors off of this place. I'm surprised there's still a roof connected to the wall.*

[Judith Hill singing in the background]

Derek: *She sat next or right behind me after she was finished with the song. I turned around and I said, "I got a song for you." I didn't even have a song.*

[laughter]

Derek: *I had a pen and paper and I got to scribbling right away.*

Nigel: New York, if I were Derek, I'd be sweating this, for sure.

New York: We're going to see whether he can pull it off later in the show.

New York: *What's your name, brother?*

Cassell: *My name is Cassell Meadors.*

New York: *Okay. What's your talent?*

Cassell: *I do singing. I love music.*

Nigel: I remember when this guy came in. He was very laid back and quiet. And I remember thinking, "Huh, is he going to be able to perform in front of us?"

New York: Yeah, he looks more like a basketball player than an R&B singer, but surprisingly he can do both.

Cassell: *[in a singing tone] I've got a question. No need for second guessing. You see, I've been through it all before. The kind of heartbreak you can't ignore.*

Nigel: *How long have you been in prison?*

Cassell: *14 years.*

Nigel: *How old are you?*

Cassell: *I am 33.*

New York: *You're young.*

Nigel: *So, does that mean he was 18?*

Cassell: *I was 19 when-- [crosstalk]*

Nigel: *19. Okay. Have you had an adult romantic relationship?*

Cassell: *I thought I had one, but no, it didn't work out.*

New York: *How hard is it to meet women from prison without the internet?*

Cassell: *Man, you pretty much got to-- I mean, not that it's a thing, but you got to walk by somebody in the visit room [laughs] just to lock eyes to somebody. That's a joke though, I'm just saying, but it is very hard. Unless you're like really cool or*

respected by someone and like, "I know this person, I know this person," unless it's something like that, it's very, very difficult, very difficult.

[in a singing tone] And I know that you know how it feels to be lonely. There's ain't too many men around you but it was my luck, I finally found you. But listen, girl, it's been a long time, I've been doing time for many now.

New York: All right, all right, all right. Beautiful, man. So, you found this woman that's holding you down.

Cassell: No. I haven't found that woman yet. That's the power of your imagination. That's the power of vision.

Nigel: Explain what that is, the mythical woman you're looking for.

Cassell: The woman who is-- she's down with you no matter what. No matter how much time you're doing, no matter, if you angry or you're having a difficult moment, she's still there through everything. She can't really relate, but she understands what you're going through and is willing to just be there.

Nigel: Okay. What's the difference between that and a mom?

Cassell: Oh, man. Oh, hold on. Wait, I can answer this question. *[laughs]* What's crazy is, mind you, I love my mom, I've always strove for the acceptance of my mom because--

Nigel: Well, I'm just saying you're talking about someone that's just going to take care of me.

Cassell: Yeah, they're separate too. My mom was not that woman.

Nigel: Okay. But let's not just say about your mom, but I'm just saying about in general, you're asking for someone to take care of you.

Cassell: Not really take care of me. Just be there for me.

Nigel: *[crosstalk]* What does this woman get out of it? What else can she be besides someone that's there to take care and be there always for you?

Cassell: She will be a woman who in return will always be cared for, will always be loved. I will always be there for her like she was there for me. How can you turn away from that kind of woman?

Nigel: Well, it's a fantasy of what a woman is. It sounds very like fantasy.

New York: *It is a dream but we see it. We see women who've been in that visiting room for decades.*

Cassell: *Yeah.*

New York: *They stay down and so they're rare, but when you see it and you know it exists, it's something you can hope for.*

Cassell: *Yeah, I'm a hopeless romantic. So what?*

[laughter]

Nigel: *Okay. Since you really want to meet a woman, give us an old-fashioned personal ad.*

Cassell: *Well, I see, I don't got time to think about this. I got to--*

[laughter]

New York: *From that song, I thought you've been thinking about it for a long time.*

Cassell: *I mean, the songs speak for itself. My name is Cassell Meadors. I'm 33 years old. Tall, dark, and handsome. Name is Cas-- Argh. Let me-- hold on. Let me-- You guys start that over, like-- Okay. My name is Cassell Meadors. I'm from San Francisco, California. Well, yeah--*

Rhashiyd: *You're uncomfortable talking--[crosstalk]*

Cassell: *I'm very uncomfortable talking all about this stuff.*

Rhashiyd: *[laughs] For somebody who sings, I'd think you would be just-- [crosstalk] I'm a genius. I figured it out. Sing your ad.*

Nigel: *So, that's our inside sound designer, Rhashiyd, and he had this great idea, since Cassell was tongue tied, why don't he actually sing his personal ad? I mean he's a singer, right?*

New York: *That's what he does.*

Nigel: *Brilliant. Yeah, sing your ad.*

Rhashiyd: *Tell us who you are in song, then that way--*

Cassell: *[in singing tone] I'm from San Francisco. Tall, dark, and handsome.*

[laughter]

Cassell: *You crazy. Oh, my God. Y'all crazy.*

New York: *[in singing tone] Six foot three and three quarters. [laughs]*

New York: Cassell wasn't comfortable singing his personal ad either.

Nigel: No, he wasn't. So, we decided to produce one for him.

New York: Ladies, here you go.

Cassell *Yeah, my name is Cassell Meadors. I'm 33 years old, born in November 26, 1988. I've been incarcerated for about 14 years. I'm driven, respectful, I'm kind, I'm affectionate, I'm caring, I'm good looking. So, I'm looking for somebody who's also driven, who's kind. The woman who's down with you, no matter what. No matter how much time you doing. If you're angry or having a difficult moment, she's still there. That type of woman, how can you turn away that kind of woman?*

Nigel: Ooh, I like it. Ear Hustle Music: Classifieds.

[laughter]

Cassell: *[in a singing tone] I've got a question. No need for second guessing. You see, I've been through it all before. The kind of heartbreak you can't ignore. I know that you know how it feels to be lonely. There's ain't too many men around you, and it was my luck I finally found you. I guess I am lucky. God, it's been a long time. I've been doing time for many now. Time will be--[crosstalk]*

New York: Cassell, he isn't the only guy I've recently met who's longing for a woman and who writes songs about them.

Nigel: I know. I mean I hear so many guys talk in very sweet ways about this desire for love and connection.

New York: Well, here's another one.

New York: *Who are you?*

Tam: *My name is Tam Nguyen.*

Nigel: Yeah. Tam might be the first guy in Ear Hustle history to now be in three episodes one right after the other. Remember a couple episodes ago, he had some song lyrics hanging out of his shirt pocket?

New York: Yup, Tam writes his own songs, and he has a real nice, smooth R&B feel.

You know what's crazy, when I first met you and heard you sing, I thought you're like an Asian John B. Then, I realized, "Wait a minute, that's racist." He's just like a John B.

Tam: Yes, you're right. That was racist of you.

[laughter]

Tam: *It's like when people say, "You want some Chinese food?" "Asians, we just call it food. It's not called Chinese food."*

[laughter]

New York: *My bad. I was just about to offer you some Chinese food.*

Tam: *How much of it do you want me to play so I know where to start?*

Nigel: *Like a minute or something?*

Tam: *Okay. I'll just play the first verse of the chords.*

[playing a guitar]

Tam: *[in a singing tone] I can't help that I get so obsessive when you step to me, focus on your hips. You like how I get so aggressive pressing closely, tasting your lips. At times, I get a bit excessive. Touch you constantly, always wanting more. I could be so damn possessive. Want you all to me, all to myself. There's something in the way that you look at me. Hey, honestly, I'm the only one you see, makes me want you more. [humming] There's something in the way that you sing to me. Oh, your lips calling my name each time you breathe. I need you desperately. [humming] Oh, [unintelligible [00:18:53] when you come, it's so hopeless, I'm so hopeless. Only [unintelligible [00:18:59] to my soul. This can be the holy grail. Hate no one going to see--*

Originally, this song came up because I was writing defects of character for my CGA group,

Nigel: *CGA stands for Criminal & Gangs Anonymous, and it's one of those self-help groups that a lot of guys at San Quentin take.*

Tam: *And one of my steps was to write down my character defects. So, when I wrote it out, I noticed that I'm a very obsessive person, I can be possessive, excessive, all those things that I mentioned there.*

Nigel: So, Tam started writing a song about these obsessive tendencies of his and how they cause problems in his relationships.

New York: Yeah. I remember when he was talking about this, like, "What are you talking about? Straight men in prison don't get too many opportunities to meet women to have these kinds of relationships."

Nigel: Yeah, exactly. So, we asked him, are these relationship-relationships? Or they're more kind of wishful thinking?

Tam: *So, it's combinations of real experiences.*

New York: *What do you mean real experiences?*

Tam: *Just real experiences.*

New York: *Like what real experiences?*

Tam: *When you had real relationships with people.*

New York: *Relationships with people where?*

Tam: *Like on the streets. I've had a relationship in prison.*

New York: *A relationship in prison?*

Tam: *Yeah.*

New York: *With who?*

Tam: *I had a relationship with a staff at one time.*

Nigel: *Can you talk about it?*

Tam: *Uh, enough.*

Nigel: This is not a topic we get many people to talk about.

New York: Yeah, relationships between staff and incarcerated people are a real, real big no-no. A real big taboo.

Nigel: *And when was this relationship with the staff?*

Tam: *It was like a couple years ago, like maybe a year ago.*

New York: A year ago?

Tam: Yeah. It was probably a year ago.

New York: So, you just wrote this song. This is brand new.

Tam: Yes.

New York: Tam had been in prison for 18 years by the time he met this woman. And they got to know each other.

Nigel: At some point, Tam really crossed the line. He asked for her phone number.

Tam: I felt like it was reciprocated, my flirting, my joking, my friendship. I don't know how I asked, I know that I asked. My adult life in prison, I've been here since I was 22. I'm 42 right now. So, that means that-- and then before that I was in juvenile incarceration, homeless gang life. There was no time for a relationship. Not real relationships. Not even with another friend. They were just my gang friends.

I joined a gang because I felt alone. I wanted a family. So, having somebody where they accept me for-- just going back to the song, somebody that knows me, that became my friend, that's seen it and heard it, accepted it because they see I'm trying to work on it-

Nigel: Yeah.

Tam: -it's one of the most uplifting things. It motivated me to even try to be better. In an ironic way, I mean I'm doing stuff wrong, I want to be better because somebody recognized it and said, "I care about you because of it."

New York: Were you running around all happy where people started to see you guys to interact together or just seeing your happiness and kind of pick up on it?

Tam: I don't think that I came off giddy or happier, but people did notice that we talked more often.

Nigel: I was so curious about that too, because I think when people are in love or they're doing something illicit, they don't realize the signals they're giving off.

Tam: Yeah.

Nigel: And you think I'm playing it cool, but I bet people notice that you were a little happier or definitely that they were spending time together.

Tam: Yes. They did notice that she was talking to me more. I knew in my head, I go, "Man, I'm going to get in trouble." But my loneliness and my happiness were just being able to have somebody say they care about me was more important to me than anything else, any consequence at the moment.

Nigel: I really felt it when he was talking about this. His loneliness was palpable. I could really understand how that happened.

New York: Definitely. It's like when you're doing time alone, it feels like you're not worthy of love and nobody cares about you. You want somebody to go through the effort of loving you, despite your circumstances.

Nigel: Yeah.

Tam: There was a part of me at one time, I was going to die in here. I have a double life sentence, and I was never going home. So, being in the relationship, I tell myself, "Okay, I care about this person, I feel happier. I could give it up right now and not be as happy and I might die in here still." So, my selfishness took over and said, "I'd rather be happy right now." I was selfish. I just wanted to be happy. It overrode all my reasoning process at the moment. I was obsessive about how I felt in that relationship to be able to see them daily, or whenever I could see them.

New York: How did it go bad? How did you guys get found out?

Tam: Somebody said something. You know how prison's like. Whether they know or not, as long as they drop a kite, and then they start looking into it.

Nigel: Did you feel like it was coming, that that moment was coming?

Tam: Yes, I did feel it was coming.

Nigel: And how did that-- did you get stomachaches? Were you nervous?

Tam: I felt tense, stressed all the time, but more, I felt bad, that it might be going to hurt their life.

Nigel: What did she give up or what process did she go through once this came out?

Tam: She quit her job. Basically, start over, have to go find a whole new career.

Nigel: What did you give up for this relationship, do you think?

Tam: My own mental health. This has been stressful for me. So, this happened about a year ago where I've been transferred several times to random places that

I should probably shouldn't be, then they transfer me out again because of this. I'm worried about retaliation by officers. I've had officers, they pull me over and they say something, they make a comment and then now I'm paranoid, I'm afraid.

Nigel: *You both gave up a lot. How did you decide that was worth it?*

Tam: *For me, we're still together.*

Nigel: *Oh, wait. You're still together?*

Tam: *Yes*

Nigel: *Oh.*

Tam: *I don't want it to be like this. I wish it could have been some other way. I wish I would've walked away, or I would've transferred. I would've transferred myself right away. I wish that's what I would have done. I regret it every day that I hurt her life. But to feel happy for somebody who's not had happiness is something that, for me, I look at and I go, "It was worth it."*

[Tam's *Desperately* song playing]

Nigel: All right. It's time to flip over that mixtape.

New York: When we come back, we're heading to the California Institution for Women.

Nigel: Okay, New York, this is pretty exciting. First time we are having women in the music episode.

New York: Yes, and their stories are pretty different. I mean, Cassel and Tam, they were longing for romance. But at CIW--

Earlonne: *We're ready for y'all.*

New York: It seems like the longing was for something else.

Earlonne: *We definitely ready for y'all, come on through. Who's going to be singing?*

Nigel: *Katrina's going to start.*

Katrina is 30 and she looks even younger. She's small, kind of this spritely presence with this punky hairdo. Before she played, we talked to her childhood. She told us she was removed from her birthmother when she was just two years old.

Any memories of being that little?

Katrina: *It's literally just one sole memory of my childhood. I remember a step, like a step that leads to the door and I was locked in a garage. I just remember sitting there, there was a vehicle with no wheels sitting on bricks. I was just curious to be wondering why I was there, what am I doing, how do I get out. Not fearful, not anything, just curious. I described the house to my sister and she's like, "How did you know that? You were like one years old then." It must have been an impacting moment to have been able to recall that memory. Apart from that? Nothing.*

Earlonne: *Were you locked in there or did you get locked in there?*

Katrina: *From what I hear, I was frequently placed in there, just like locked in there. I don't know. Maybe it was my time-out section. [chuckles]*

Nigel: *Katrina was adopted by another family. She didn't see her birthmother for years, until she was in her late teens.*

Earlonne: *Did you know of her?*

Katrina: *Through story. My adoptive mother just passed down a little bit of stories, not the greatest stories. Some of the words used to describe her were "crazy," "unstable" and "neurotic," I guess. I didn't even know what she looked like. Having grown up in a household that made it really clear like I was now a part of their family, I wasn't even shown pictures. And so, it was really neat that when I did eventually meet her, I am like a dead-set image of her.*

Nigel: *You recognized her right away, like that you had to be related to that woman?*

Katrina: *Definitely had to be related. There's no not owning me. There's this specific song that I wrote, just my own personal experience of being 22 years old, having just recently met my mother at 18, and then being arrested and faced with 15 to life. So, that obviously evoked a lot of emotion and turn it, it produced a song. So, here it is.*

[in a singing tone] Got a mother crying for her daughter and a daughter crying for her mother. And they both lay awake wondering how long will it before they see each other. With the story untold and the future to yet unfold. The only hope to hold on to is I should come back home. Hello, I haven't heard your voice in a while-- [song fades away]

Katrina: *My mother is a character. She's originally from Chile, so she was born and raised in Chile during its communist years. So, she didn't have the best*

upbringing either. So, it's understandable her inability to raise me. I feel there's so many unanswered questions throughout my life, and I'm slowly being able to reconnect the puzzle pieces, having been able to reunite with my mother. She's still that gallivanting wanderer. So, I don't get to stay in contact with her much because she's always on the go.

Nigel: *Is there anything that you would like to thank your mom for? Even though I know it sounds like you have a problematic relationship, is there anything you would thank her for?*

Katrina: *I say this with all humility, but this face though. [laughs] Just kidding. No, I really do appreciate being able to say that my heritage is from Chile. I'm just appreciative of being able to actually see that in me, in my genetics, where I come from.*

Nigel: *Okay. Did we get that? You're thankful for your face? Okay.*

[laughter]

Nigel: *That's good.*

Katrina: *[in singing tone] My mother is still praying for her daughter and I'm still praying to meet my mother. Both are like wondering, how long will it be before we see each other again.*

[applause]

Katrina: *Thank you.*

Lizzy: *I'm Elysia Cossey, I'm known around here as Lizzy or Liz. I prefer Lizzy though.*

Nigel: *Lizzy has blonde shoulder length hair. She's in her late 30s and has a gentle, kind of soft-spoken way about her.*

Lizzy: *Prison has been good for me. I've learned to think for myself. I've learned to feel all the things that I had blocked away. So, songwriting was a huge blessing when I got into this program. Gave me permission, especially while I was going through my divorce, to feel the anger and the outrage. My first songs I wrote were quite raw. They were pretty raw, pretty harsh, but it was what I needed to go through at that time.*

I have twin girls. Yeah, they're 14 now. They're wonderful. My mother has been raising them. They're doing really well.

Nigel: *Do you have contact with your children?*

Lizzy: Yeah, I do.

Nigel: You do. What do you pass on to them about what you've learned about yourself, or are they too young?

Lizzy: Oh, no. Yeah, we talk on occasion. We write to each other. I want to share with them the things that are most important to me, because they do struggle in schools. On occasion, they have anxieties and stuff. But I try to share with them the lessons that I've learned to overcome challenges and struggles and find the blessings.

Nigel: That's hard for a kid to understand though.

Lizzy: It is hard for them. I remember when I was their age, my father had been in prison for a long time. I remember knowing what that gaping hole in my heart felt like. Having grown up with the ideal of intact families that love and care for each other, and I didn't have that, I felt like I was robbed and that created a lot of struggle for me in my teen years. So, I understand and I empathize with what they're going through. So, I try to just share the coping skills that I'm learning, and I encourage them to give expression to what they do feel, whatever that may be.

Nigel: Since you went through growing up with a parent that was incarcerated and you talked about having that gaping hole, what's your biggest fear for your children?

Lizzy: Don't marry somebody like their father.

Here we go.

[in a singing tone] There are no words to say, life is a day. Silent prayer feeds me then. Open up my heart, let me see the day. Hear the words, need them to stay. Don't say, make it go away, endure. Please say it will be okay, endure. Endure. There's light inside my eyes, helps me see for miles. That alone will lead me home. So much more to see or to understand. It's meant to be, [unintelligible [00:36:54] Don't say, just make it all go away, endure. Please say it will all someday be okay, endure. Look toward the horizon faraway from there-- [song fades away]

Nigel: New York, whatever happened to our friend, Derek Barboza?

New York: Derek from Brooklyn?

Nigel: Mm-hmm. Last time we heard from him, he had told Judith Hill, a very legit musician, that he had a song for her.

New York: And, Nyge, he had nothing. [laughs]

Derek: *I didn't even have a song.*

[laughter]

Derek: *I had a pen and paper, and I got to scribbling right away. I wanted to write a song that is about transformative power. You know what I mean? Healing power, the power to get clean, the power to start doing right, the power to put your foot on the ground and turn a situation around.*

New York: So, there's a bunch of guys sitting in the chapel and they're working on their music, and outside musicians are working with them. Eventually, Judith goes over to Derek, and they start going over his song, line by line.

Derek: *I'm working with an artist. We're building a song from nothing. I was giving her the melody line of the lyrics because she doesn't know it. And that was weird because she's a pro. She's like, "Well, how do you sing this?" I'm like, "Girl, like this."*

[laughter]

There was a point when I really felt that she was feeling the song as opposed to just being nice. She actually got into it, I could tell by her body language. You know when you feel it, you can't fake that when that because she was like, "Oh, no, that's just good. All right." And then, it was just like, I don't even have the vocab to describe this. To say it's off the hook is an understatement of the decade.

New York: And, Nyge, remember how Derek grew up wanting to be Jimi Hendrix?

Nigel: Yes.

New York: Check this out.

New York: *And you're going to be playing guitar?*

Derek: *Yep. I'm going to be playing guitar and I got a guitar solo that I hope I don't fall on my face on, I'm going to try to represent. We're sitting on chairs opposite side of each other. You see that guitar she's holding right now?*

New York: Yeah.

Derek: *That's the SG. Everybody in the guitar world knows what a SG. It's an iconic guitar. Gibson. It's a \$5000 guitar. She just hands it to me and goes, "Here, play this. Here, give me your guitar." The one from Walkenhorst's. She's like, "Oh, give me that." It's like a \$75 special. You know what I'm saying? [laughs] I'm handing a \$75 guitar to a R&B superstar, and she received it like it was nothing. She's just so completely down to earth and I ain't going to say no to no SG, I grabbed the SG and I'm like, "For real?" She's like, "Come on, show me the chords. Forget that, for real stuff. Show me the chords."*

[Judith singing Derek's song together]

New York: Before we go, remember that old school rapper with the new school flow we promised you? It is none other than our inside sound designer, Rhashiyd Zinnamon with *Eucaliptis Petalz*.

[*Eucaliptis Petalz* by Rhashiyd Zinnamon playing]

Earlonne: What's up, Nyge?

Nigel: So, Earlonne, what did you think? What did you think of old Rhashiyd's tune there?

Earlonne: I think it's old school. It's a cool message. He flows. Nice one, Chief.

Nigel: It's a nice way to close out the music episode, for sure.

[*Eucaliptis Petalz* by Rhashiyd Zinnamon playing]

Nigel: This episode was produced by me, Nigel Poor, along with Earlonne Woods, Rahsaan 'New York' Thomas, Rhashiyd Zinnamon, Tony Tafoya, and Bruce Wallace.

Earlonne: We'd like to thank Andrew "Boots" Hardy and John Eagan for also performing a great song for us which, in the end, we couldn't put in the show.

Nigel: Thanks also to Rene and Scotty at the Birthplace of Country Music for their help with trying to get that song licensed for us to use.

Earlonne: This episode was sound designed and engineered by me, Earlonne Woods, with help from Fernando Arruda.

Nigel: It features music by Antwan Williams, Rhashiyd Zinnamon, and David Jassy.

Earlonne: Amy Standen edits our show, Shabnam Sigman is our managing producer, and Bruce Wallace is our executive producer.

Nigel: Thanks to Warden Ron Broomfield. And as you know, every episode of Ear Hustle has to be approved by this guy here.

Lieutenant Sam Robinson: When the episode first opened up, and I heard those bad tunes, I was like, "Man, who did they record?" I remember going over there to the Musicambia while they were practicing. I was like, "This is going to be a mess. Oh, no, no." [laughs] But I'll tell you, man, within a few hours, the next day, they had put that thing together and it was really, really entertaining. It was really, really engaging. People's heart was on display. Their talent was on display. And it was something that was really, really entertaining. And so, with that, I am Lieutenant Sam Robinson and I do approve this episode.

Earlone: 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.

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: And when we're not in San Quentin, we record at KQED Studios in San Francisco.

Earlone: You can hear full versions of the songs you heard in this episode on our music page, *earhustlesq.com/music*.

Nigel: And, in the latest issue of The Lowdown, inside producer and sound designer, Rhashiyd Zinnamon, talks about his songwriting.

Earlone: And you get a brand-new road-trip playlist from our recent drive to the California Institution for Women. Sign up at *earhustlesq.com/newsletter*. I'm Earlone Woods.

Nigel: I'm Nigel Poor.

Earlone and Nigel: Thanks for listening.

Person: *[in a singing tone] Turn me on to that good thing, baby, and turn it on inside out with the power. Power-- No, I can't sing. Don't laugh at me out there. Well, you know what? Go ahead and laugh. [laughs]*

End of Episode