



**Episode 34: Catch a Kite 4**  
**Air Date: September 11, 2019**

**Cori Thomas:** [00:00] I'm Cori Thomas, writer of the play *Lockdown*. This episode of *Ear Hustle* contains explicit language. Please be advised, this may not be for every listener. Discretion is advised.

[00:11] [Footsteps on concrete backed by minimal music that fades out]

**Rahsaan “New York” Thomas:** [00:16] Can you show Nigel the two signs you showed me today? [Tommy laughs]

**Tommy Wickerd:** [00:24] Really? [Laughs]

**Nigel Poor:** [00:24] [Inaudible] [From a distance] Did they get it?

**New York:** [00:26] That's the sign for bullshit. [All laugh]

**Nigel:** [00:29] [Laughs] You think I'm not going to learn that one right away? Well everyone...

**Tommy:** [00:31] I was all thinking *Ear Hustle*, right?

**Nigel:** [00:34] [Still in the distance] I gotta admit that's...

**New York:** [00:35] Teach us that! How do you do the *Ear Hustle* sign?

**Tommy:** [00:36] Grab your ear, make an “H” and go twice.

**New York:** [00:39] [In the distance] What after this? Just like this?

**Tommy:** [00:40] “H”

**Nigel:** [00:41] Oh.

**Tommy:** [00:41] Ear. Hustle. That’s the sign for the day. [Laughs]

[00:46] [Opening theme music begins]

**New York:** [00:52] You are now tuned into *Ear Hustle* from PRX’s Radiotopia. I am Rahsaan “New York” Thomas, a resident of San Quentin State Prison in California.

**Nigel:** [1:02] And I’m Nigel Poor. I’ve been working with the guys here at San Quentin for about eight years now.

**New York:** [1:06] And together, we’re gonna answer some of your questions. [Opening theme music ends]

[01:12] [dial tone rings one backed by melancholy piano music] [Montage of voices saying “Hey, *Ear Hustle*,” “My name is Duha from L.A.,” “This is Angel from Orlando, Florida,” “This is Anne from Madison, Wisconsin,” “Scotland,” “Melbourne, Australia,” “Bay Area,” “Baltimore,” “Munich in Germany,” etc., over the sound of phones dialing, ringing, and beeping] [Eventually, the voices give way to plucky, joyful synth]

**New York:** [01:27] This is our “Catch a Kite” episode where we answer listeners’ questions and FYI, a kite is slang for notes passed around in prison. [Chattering voices inside prison]

**Nigel:** [01:36] And you know when I went to reception to record for our first episode this season, I actually saw kites flying all over the tier, like these little birds. They were going by so fast, I wasn’t even sure what I was seeing.

**New York:** [01:47] Those weren’t kites, Nige. [Nigel laughs] Those were just regular notes going up. The kites they’ll have these little tiny writing and they’re small and you can’t see ‘em, they just get around in prison by magic. [Nigel laughs]

**Nigel:** [01:57] Even though the writing’s so small you can’t see it?

**New York:** [01:58] It disappears [Nigel laughs] like a secret agent.

**Nigel:** [02:00] Well, tiny writing. I love that. But in any case, [Plucky, joyful synth] we asked you listeners to record a question and email it to us. And we got a lot of them. At least a hundred. So thanks to everyone who sent one in.

**New York:** [02:10] We're going to answer a few of the ones about life inside with help from guys on the yard and some dudes who came down to the studio to be part of the conversation.

**Nigel:** [02:18] And then, I'm going to get with our other co-host, Earlonne Woods, on the outside, to answer a few more questions about life post incarceration.

[02:26] [Whirring leads into high pitched, plucky synth]

[02:34] [Repetitive clicking sound followed by montage of voices saying, "Hi guys," "Hi," "Hey there," "Hi, *Ear Hustle*," "Hey, *Ear Hustle* team," "Hi," overlapping over one another]

**Mollie:** [02:41] Hi, my name is Mollie. I live in Atlanta, but I'm originally from Oakland and my question is whether it's hard to sleep in prison with the noise or the temperature and whether you all take naps during the day.

**Nigel:** [2:54] Thanks Molly. New York, I don't know about you, but since this podcast started, I hardly sleep. And so, uh, how's your sleep these days?

**New York:** [03:02] Actually, I'm not sleeping all that well, Nige. But that's nothing to do with the podcast.

**Nigel:** [03:06] Oh really?

**New York:** [03:07] It's just hot and my mattress is part of the punishment. [Both laugh]

**Nigel:** [03:11] Ooh.

**New York:** [03:12] But in San Quentin, your ability to sleep soundly depends not only on your mattress or the temperature, but also on where your housed.

**Nigel:** [03:18] Mhm.

**New York:** [03:19] You have cell blocks and then you have dorm living.

**Nigel:** [03:21] Yeah. This is a big topic of conversation here. Which is better? Cell living or dorm living? And New York, you live in a cell. And does the noise there keep you from sleeping?

**New York:** [03:30] It's pretty quiet in north block until about three A.M. [Sounds of men's voices chattering and bustling inside prison] That's when you hear the clack clack of gate's racking so the kitchen workers can get released to head to the kitchen.

**Nigel:** [03:38] Ugh, three A.M. That is early.

**New York:** [03:41] Hecka early. [Muffled voice over P.A. system in the background]

**Nigel:** [03:42] [Laughs] Oh god. And do you hear anything else at night? [Voices chattering inside the prison]

**New York** [03:44] Yeah, sometimes you had guys yelling "man down!" So what happens if there's an emergency...

**Nigel:** [03:49] Mhm.

**New York:** [03:50] ...guys will start yelling, "man down! Cell five eighty-two!" or whatever cell it is. And other guys are joinin' and it'll erupt into like a chorus...

**Nigel:** [03:56] Ooh.

**New York** [03:57] ...And to the C.O.'s all the way down up front at the podium can hear us and respond and get the guy some help.

**Nigel:** [04:01] Mm. [A resident yells, "Hey" in the background, over sounds of bustling of inside the prison]

[04:05] [Chopped noise from police monitor, subtle chime, and typing, echoes to fade out]

**Nigel:** [04:07] Okay, so. Back to cell living versus dorm living. There is no choice in the matter. Some guys are assigned to cells and other guys to dorms. So New York, can you explain why that is?

**New York:** [04:17] So usually what they do is guys that have under ten years left to serve on their sentence, they get sent down to the dorms. Lifers and guys with a whole bunch of time. Cells.

**Nigel:** [04:26] So that means you've never seen the dorms?

**New York:** [04:28] Nope. I'm not allowed to go down there, just like the dorm guys aren't allowed to come to the cell blocks. But you've been to a dorm, Nige.

**Nigel:** [04:35] Yep. H-Unit. [Voices chattering and laughing inside prison dorms]

**Nigel:** [04:39] Uh, I wasn't there at night. But wow, during the day, it is so chaotic. It's

this big concrete building with like a hundred bunk beds in it and everyone's moving around. There's stuff everywhere. Loud voices. You hear people in the shower and I'm sorry, it smells like men

**New York:** [04:53] Woah, [Laughs] Nige. What do men smell like? [Both laugh]

**Nigel:** [04:57] Sorry. I'm not talking about the men here, present company definitely excluded. I'm talking about what it smells like in a locker room.

**New York:** [05:05] But they have access to all-day shower.

**Nigel:** [05:07] Yeah... okay, that might be the case, but regardless, it still is pungent down there and it is freaking loud. But don't take it from me. Here's Angel who lives and sleeps in H-Unit.

**Angel Villafan:** [05:21] [Voices chattering in prison dorm in the background, mix of laughing and conversation] Um, as you can see, I'm in one of the few racks that has a window. I mean it's raining right now, but normally when it's hot I can open the window and I got a cool little breeze coming through. Versus if you live in the middle of the dorm, you better have a fan or it's bad. And you've got a blaring light in your face all night long. I have to sleep with a beanie over my eyes so it's dark.

**Nigel:** [05:41] We've mentioned this before in the podcast, but it's never really dark in prison.

**New York:** [05:46] They have to keep it like that so the C.O.'s can make sure that we're still here and nothing bad is happening in the shadows.

**Angel:** [05:51] Well this dorm compared to most dorms is relatively quiet, but like you just kind of get used to the noise after a while. It's just what it is. You just got to deal with it. You know?

**Nigel:** [06:03] New York, do guys wear earplugs? I mean, how do they deal with all that noise?

**New York:** [06:07] So remember, I live in like the condo cell housing unit where there isn't much noise...

**Nigel:** [06:11] Mhm, mhm.

**New York:** [06:12] ...after nine P.M. And I'm just thankful to God that I don't have to live in those dorms.

**Nigel:** [06:17] Well, we wanted to hear more about sleeping in dorms. So we asked our go-to stand-up comedian, Jesse Ayers to come down to the Media Lab and answer

Mollie's question. We put him in front of the mic and just let them go.

**Jesse Ayers:** [06:29] That's an interesting question. See, everything in prison is made a cement and steel. Sleeping in a cell gives you a little privacy and isolates noises. But sleeping in a dorm as loud as fuck. Every time a lock or door slams or a domino slaps on a table, it's like allow crack [Imitates loud cracking sound]. When a toilet flush is, all you hear is [Imitates sound of toilet flushing three times], all night long. The roof of the dorm is made of sheet metal. So when it rains, all you hear is a loud ass [Imitates sound of pouring rain].

[06:57] [Simple percussive beat begins]

**Nigel:** [06:58] Okay. Hard to sleep at night in the dorm. But what about napping?

**New York:** [07:02] Right. Mollie was concerned whether or not we took naps during the day. Back to Jesse. [Percussive beat ends]

**Jesse:** [07:08] Eh, after a long night or all that bullshit, you go eat breakfast, come back, you're feeling kind of drowsy. You're like, you know what? I'ma to take a nap real quick. Soon as you lay down, you hear the P.A. system start crackle on [Imitates sound of static], "Garcia, Jones, Rodriguez. Come to the podium." [Voice laughs] Five minutes later [Imitates sound of static], "Cross is canceled. [Inaudible] electronics. Witherspoon, go to your docket." All day long. The only way to avoid all that bullshit, all the noodle groovin' and all these motherfuckers yelling, cops on the [Imitates sound of static over police monitor], I just turned on my fan, [Imitates sound of fan whirring], put in some ear plugs, tie a t-shirt around my face and I'm like, fuck it.

[07:42] [Whirring, followed by sound of picking phone off a hook, and dialing numbers on a phone, followed by one dial tone]

**Nigel** [07:47] Next question. Also sound related. This guy had a few questions for us, actually. This is his second one.

**Eddie:** [07:55] [Over the phone] It's Eddie from London, again. It's a question. Why isn't there music in prison playing in the background?

[08:04] [Plucky, joyful synth begins]

**Nigel:** [08:06] For this question, Eddie, we brought in our co-producer Yahya because he has institutional knowledge on this issue. Yahya has been in prison for twenty-three years.

**New York:** [08:14] And I've been in for nineteen years and the soundtrack of prison has changed.

**Voice 1:** [08:20] There used to be an abundance of music playing in the background of prison. A lot of people start gettin' boomboxes boxes all at one time. And yeah, it changed the whole soundscape of prison.

**Voice 2:** [08:30] You would hear music coming out of each person's cell and it would be like really— music that would tell you a lot about that person.

**Voice 1:** [08:36] Yeah, I remember that. I remember that.

**Nigel:** [08:36] [in the distance] Like, what kind of music?

**Voice 2:** [08:37] Yeah. Like they'd be guys that were, like, stuck in time. And when you walk by that cell you'd hear [Voice 1 and 2 singing together] *Just my imagination, once again* [Voice 2 laughs] [all singing] *running away with me.*

**Nigel:** [08:49] Aw, that's sweet.

Voice 1: [08:49] And you know the other interesting thing about that? Is how you seem to time travel from cell to cell...

Voice 2: [08:54] Yeah, yeah, yeah

Voice 1: [08:54] ...like you might walk by one guy's cell and he might be playing rock music. Another guy might be playing rap. Mexican nationals might be playing their music. And so you gettin' all these different experiences just walking on a tier.

**Nigel:** [09:05] Did you ever hear anyone, like, blasting classical music?

**Both Voice 1 and 2:** [09:08] Uh, no. [All laugh]

**Voice 1:** [09:10] I think the classical music guys might've been afraid to play their music out loud. I don't think I've ever heard Beethoven.

**Voice 2:** [09:16] No, not once.

**Nigel:** [09:17] There's gotta be somebody.

**Voice 2:** [09:18] Nope.

**Nigel:** [09:18] No?

**Voice 1:** [09:20] I think classical guys may have been classy enough to wear headphones so they can get every note...

**Nigel:** [09:23] Ooh yeah, like—

**Voice 1:** [09:24]...yeah, yeah. But when the boombox came in, it just like turned a whole soundscape of the prison into this mishmosh sound. And so you had all these individuals competing with their own type of music and I think a lot of people complained about it. I think the C.O.'s that walked the tiers or had to sit in the office and hear a hundred guys on a tier playing different music, uh, at some point complained about it as well. And it became a problem. And so to prevent noise pollution or to stop noise pollution, they started all these ordinances, and, and, and requirements to wear headphones. So like...

**Voice 2:** [09:59] Yes. And prison just got quiet. I mean, they don't provide any elevator music. No Beethoven, no Lil Wayne, nothing.

**Voice 1:** [10:07] No tool. Metallica.

**Voice 2:** [10:09] Oh lord.

**Voice 1:** [10:10] [Voice 2 laughs] Everybody just walk around with their heads nodding and you don't know what they're playing and you're left to wonder.

**New York:** [10:15] What soundtrack is in their mind? Like, what they listen to?

**Nigel:** [10:19] It's a great question. Like, yeah, what is it? What'd be your soundtrack in prison? If we pulled out their earbuds, what would we hear?

**New York:** [10:26] What would we hear? Yup.

[10:27] [Quiet chatter inside prison]

**New York:** [10:30] So this guy named Eddie from London, man, he wonders why, like, in prison, they don't have no background music. No theme songs. If you could choose a theme song for your life in prison, what would it be?

**Voice 3:** [10:40] [Singing] *I've been the stormy rains. But I made it. I've had my share of ups-and-downs. But I made it. I made it.*

**Voice 4:** [10:56] [Singing] [Voices chattering in background, mixed with sounds of recreation, like basketball bouncing] *Buffalo soldier. Dreadlock Rasta. Stolen from Africa. Brought to America.* Yeah. That joint right there.

**Voice 5:** [11:08] [Singing in Spanish] *Mesa, mesa, mesa que más aplauda. Mesa que más aplauda. Mesa que más aplauda se lleva, se lleva, se lleva la niña.* [Laughs]

**Voice 6:** [11:14] [Singing] *I'm a maniac, maniac.* [Several men laughing and clapping]

**Voice 7:** [11:18] [Singing] *Do-doo-do-doo.* [All singing] *Do-doo-do-doo. Do-doo-do.* [Voice 7 singing alone] *And Freddie's dead. That's what I said.*

**Voice 8:** [11:26] [Singing] *We found love right where we are.* That's my San Quentin song. [Voices chattering and laughing, saying "What?" playfully, "woo!" and "woah!" in response]

**Voice 9:** [11:35] [Singing] *I wake up in the morning sun. And the sunlight hits my eyes. It's gonna be a lovely day. Lovely day. Lovely day.*

**Voice 10:** [11:45] [Singing] *I turned 21 in prison, doing sixteen to life.*

**Voice 11:** [11:49] [Singing] *I always feel like somebody's watching me.* [Several men sing along, laughing] *I always feel like somebody's watching me.* [Voice 11 singing alone] *Who's playing tricks on me? Oh ooh.* [All join in singing] *I always feel like somebody's watching me. I got no privacy. Oh ooh.* [All erupt into laughter and clapping]

[12:08] [Dial tone, clicking sound, leads into Montage of several voices saying, "My question is..." overlapping over one another]

**Karen:** [12:15] Hi there. My name's Karen and I live in Colorado. And I used to be a sign language interpreter, so I find myself wondering how deaf people fare in prison. That must be incredibly difficult. Do they provide sign language interpreting services for them on a day-to-day basis? Or are they totally dependent on lip reading, which isn't easy and, uh, writing notes kind of a thing?

**New York:** [12:40] Hey Karen. Well, we don't have too many guys here at San Quentin that are hearing-impaired right now, but in the Fall we got a group coming in and I know somebody who's really excited to meet them.

**Tommy:** [12:53] [Voices chattering in background] My name is Tommy Lee Wickerd and I've been in prison for eighteen years.

**New York:** [12:56] How did you learn sign language?

**Tommy:** [12:59] My older brother Michael is deaf, so I grew up with it. That's how I talked to my brother, was using my hands and learn sign language. I miss my brother bad. But come September, I'm told that ten deaf prisoners are coming to San Quentin. I'm trying to get as many as I can, uh, prisoners as well as officers to know the basic signs for shower, yard, dinner, count, just simple signs, church. Uh, and a manual alphabet. Like I said earlier, this, this is my brother's community and this opportunity and— I'm in prison and I've got a release date of two thousand fifty so it could be awhile before I get out to the community to work with any deaf community and they're coming here. So it's going to be a reward when I get to talk to the deaf community and welcome, welcome them to San Quentin.

[13:54] [Gentle, jazzy synth begins]

**Nigel:** [13:53] So Tommy's gonna be there when the new group of hearing-impaired men arrive and he's going to be busy not only signing with them, but also teaching the rudiments of sign language to C.O.'s and any other guy who wants to learn.

**New York:** [14:04] But that's not all the preparation that's going on. Recently there was a town hall meeting in San Quentin about the incoming hearing-impaired population. Deanna Sardo was there. She works as a sign language interpreter within CDCR and she told us about the challenges of signing in prison. [Gentle, jazzy synth ends]

**Deanna Sardo:** [14:20] And, and honestly, the language changes every day. I mean I had to learn all the prison terminology when I started working there.

**Nigel:** [14:26] Can you tell us some of the prisons slang you had to learn?

**Deanna:** [14:29] I would sign in jail with these guys and they'd be like, no, we're not in jail, we're in prison. And so they would correct me and show me how to sign "prison." And then, um, just like, uh, terminologies like the "hole," when they go to "ad seg" and you know, "one fifteen hearings" and "committee" and "canteen" and you know, just terms that we don't use on the streets. "C.O."...

**New York:** [14:51] Is this is their stuff like "pruno?" Did you have to make up a sign for stuff, like, prison slang?

**Deanna:** [14:55] No, we just do alcohol for that, but they know.

[14:59] [Joyful, plucky synth]

**Nigel:** [15:01] Of course they know. And hearing-impaired guys use those same prison acronyms. So can you translate them for the listeners, New York? Like "ad seg?"

**New York:** [15:10] That's the hole.

**Nigel:** [15:11] Okay. And what about a "one fifteen hearing?"

**New York:** [15:14] A hearing where you try to get out of trouble. [both laugh]

**Nigel:** [15:18] How's it work?

**New York:** [15:18] You sit before a Captain or Lieutenant and you tell them why you're not guilty of a rule violation. [Joyful, plucky synth ends]

**Nigel:** [15:23] Alright. Okay. So, there's another group at San Quentin with hearing issues. There's a rapidly aging population here and some of the guys have lost partial hearing like Norman Willhoit.

**New York:** [15:34] And so, ever since you got your hearing aids, are people treating you any differently?

**Norman Wilhoite:** [15:39] Yeah, they're talking louder. [All laugh] Which, which is, you know, defeats the purpose of the hearing aids. 'Cause if people talked louder to begin with, I wouldn't have to wear the hearing aids.

**New York:** [15:48] Has anybody tried to bully you since they saw the hearing aids?

**Norman:** [15:51] No. They feel sorry for me. [All laugh] They start, they start calling me grandpa, gramps, double OG. I said, "what's double OG?" Really old. [All laugh]

[16:04] Dial tone, clicking sound, leads into Montage of several voices saying, "I was just wondering about..." "Religion," "Poetry," "What smells do you..." "Education," "...when you're in prison?" etc. overlapping over one another, fading into an echo]

**Voice 12** [16:16] [Over the phone] I'm a public defender in Southern California. How often do the inmates think about their lawyer or blame their lawyer or think about them positively or negatively? Just curious.

**Nigel:** [16:29] So New York, did you blame your attorney?

**New York:** [16:31] You know, I used to blame my attorney for not being prepared for trial, for not investigating enough, for not listening to me. And when we lost trial, he wouldn't do half of time with me, Nige.

**Nigel:** [16:41] Oh god. [Laughs] Okay. But what about now?

**New York:** [16:42] Uh, now realize that I wouldn't have needed a good lawyer if I hadn't been a criminal in the first place.

**Nigel:** [16:47] Mhm. Okay, well, let's hear from Timothy Hicks who had a memorable experience with a public defender.

**Timothy Hicks:** [16:54] I had a, I had a dump truck, man, you know.

**New York:** [16:56] What's a dump truck?

**Timothy:** [16:57] [Voices chattering in background] A dump truck is a fucked-up attorney. You know, who don't, who don't do shit the right way. This one time I was fighting this dope case, right? And you know, it was like my umpteenth drug charge, right? Anyway though, right. So I just said, okay, I'll take two years. We can give you two years. Alright, I'll take it. So when he go and get up in there, he couldn't get me the two year deal and came back with this, "Oh well, this, that, there and the other" and sort of blaming all kinds of other shit on it. I was like, man, fuck you, man.

**New York:** [17:24] So if you saw that a lawyer today, would you give him a hug?

**Timothy:** [17:27] I don't think I gave him a hug. [Laughs] I would probably just, you know, just say what's up or something, you know?

**Nigel:** [17:36] Uh, did you ever have a dump truck?

**New York:** [17:39] Ouch, Nige. Lawyers are people too. You know, they just regular people. Some of them might be gullible. Like my boy, Juan Haines, is about to tell us.

**Juan Haines:** [17:47] For me, I, you know, I was guilty. So you know, even at, at the time when I was trying to get out of all this mess, it felt like the public defender that was assigned to my case did a phenomenal job of, of trying to cloud the truth. You know? So...

**New York:** [18:03] So you never once called your public defender a dump truck?

**Juan:** [18:06] No, no, no. I mean, I was, I was the guy. I was that guy, you know. I had a bunch of lies that I fed my, uh, public defender and, and she just ran with them, you know. So [Laughs] I was like, I can't believe she went for that one too, you know? [New York laughs] So I felt bad. It's like how many lies can I build? They say I wasn't the guy in that picture holding that bag of money walking out of the bank. It was me.

[18:34] Dial tone followed by whirring and montage of voices saying, "Could you please explain the process?" "From the outside," etc., overlapping over one another]

**Valerie:** [18:43] [Over the phone] Hi there. This is Valerie from San Francisco. I have a question. So my husband is coming home after twenty four years and a couple months. We're MWI, Met While Incarcerated, and we've been together for a few years now. I was just wondering if you guys had any suggestions. Um, we have great communication. Everything is great and wonderful, but I know that he gets anxiety sometimes. So I was just kind of wondering what suggestions you had for his reintegration. Thank you.

**Nigel:** [19:11] So to answer this question, I'm now on the outside with our co-host, Earlonne Woods.

**Earlonne Woods:** [19:15] Whaddup, Nige?

**Nigel:** [19:15] Hey, E! Good to see you.

**Earlonne:** [19:17] Man, great seeing you. And to Valerie. Hello, how you doing? Thanks for your question. And I must admit it's the first time I heard MWI.

**Nigel:** [19:25] You've gotta be kidding me.

**Earlonne:** [19:26] I've never heard of it.

**Nigel:** [19:28] [Inaudible]

**Earlonne:** [19:29] I mean, I've heard it without seeing MWI. Met While Incarcerated...

**Nigel:** [19:31] Ooh, okay, okay.

**Earlonne:** [19:32] ...but MWI as the —. I've never seen that. But to answer your question, Valerie, I went and talked to two couples, Chapple and Tracy, and Ray and Bertha. Chapple did twenty years and parole from San Quentin in December of twenty seventeen. Here's his wife, Tracy.

**Tracy Sims:** [19:50] He wouldn't even want to order his own meals when he went out. He wanted to sit facing the door. Um, what else did you do? [Laughs]

**Chapple Sims:** [20:02] I don't know [Laughs] I'm listening to you now.

**Tracy:** [20:06] Um, he, he didn't feel comfortable walking in the mall. He walked kinda like behind me. [dog whining and yipping] Like he didn't want to take the lead when it came to doing anything.

**Nigel:** [20:20] Uh, it sounds like there was another being in that room. [Laughs] What was that little squeaking?

**Earlonne:** [20:24] Yeah, that was, that was, Little, uh, [Inaudible]. I should have interviewed him too because Chapple did just appear in his life too. [Loth laughing]

**Nigel:** [20:31] He sounded a little anxious. [Earlonne laughs] Oh boy.

**Earlonne:** [20:22] [Inaudible].

**Nigel:** [20:35] Well, speaking about being anxious, I actually hear this a lot, Earlonne. That guys when they get out, sometimes have a really hard time making decisions.

**Earlonne:** [20:40] Hell yeah. Shit, I still have problems making decisions on a menu at a restaurant.

**Nigel:** [20:44] Ooh, that's a luxury problem. [Both laughing]

**Earlonne:** [20:46] And bigger decisions like a four one K, your medical shit, you know, all that stuff is just issues...

**Nigel:** [20:52] Yeah...

**Earlonne:** [20:52] ...you know what I'm saying?

**Nigel:** [20:53] Yep, yep.

**Earlonne:** [20:53] And you don't have those type of problems in prison because you don't have a lot of choices

**Nigel:** [20:57] That's so true.

**Earlonne:** [20:57] A lot of stuff is given to you or most of the time shit is decided for you.

**Nigel:** [21:01] Right.

**Earlonne:** [21:02] But Chapple also says there's something else to look out for when someone's coming home.

**Chapple:** [21:07] I'm thinking a person coming home, you need space. You need your individual space.

**Earlonne:** [21:12] Is that like, uh, the she shed and a man cave?

**Chapple:** [21:17] Yeah. See mine, mine was different because I didn't come from a cell. Coming from a dorm. So the bathroom situation and all that stuff wasn't a issue. But it was like, your quiet time. Your solitude that you was, that you normally used to that you still look forward here.

**Nigel:** [21:35] So I totally get what he means. And Earlonne, did you have that same feeling when you got out that you needed personal space?

**Earlonne:** [21:41] [Laughs] Man, prison is so crazy all the time. It's like a gnat at picnic, just driving you crazy...

**Nigel:** [21:48] ...like you just can't get away from anyone

**Earlonne:** [21:49] ...you can't get away from nobody. You always being looked at. But, let's go to the second couple.

**Ray Ford:** [21:56] My name is Ray Ford. I was incarcerated for thirty-one years. I met my wife while incarcerated. Her name is Bertha Ford.

**Bertha Ford:** [22:04] I'm Bertha. Uh, like Ray said, we've been married for twenty plus years and I met him while he was incarcerated. Some of the problems that I encountered. The biggest thing [Claps for emphasis] was patience on my part. Have to be patient because their way of thinking is completely different. [Laughs] I will tell you this, when my husband first came home, you know how you the guys work out? He was still working out, taking a shower, washing his workout clothes in the bathtub and putting it on the fan to dry. [Laughs] So you have to get— little things like that— you have to,

uh, to consider, but it's all good. And, uh, like I said, patience and the biggest thing is prayer.

[22:55] [Whirring, followed by sound of picking phone off a hook, and dialing numbers on a phone, followed by one dial tone]

**Maggie:** [22:56] Hi, this is Maggie calling from Santa Cruz. My question is for both Earlonne and Nigel. I'm just wondering how your relationship has changed now Earlonne is a free man. It just seems like such an interesting dynamic where Nigel was free to come and go and Earlonne had to stay put. And now that you're co-workers and more on an equal playing field and can share things and, um, you know, go out to eat and talk freely, I guess, I'm just wondering how your relationship has changed, if at all. Thank you.

**Nigel:** [23:28] Okay. Earlonne, I love this question. [Both laugh] Who's gonna answer first, you or me?

**Earlonne:** [23:32] Well, I can answer this question.

**Nigel:** [23:33] Okay, let's hear it. Well, I'm gonna answer too! You're not gonna be the only one. Let's hear what you have to say.

**Earlonne:** [23:35] Well, Nigel cook better food [Nigel laughs] than what she was bringing in to prison. So now I'm able to eat the food that she cook. [Both laugh]

**Nigel:** [23:45] You know what, for us and our relationship, it often goes back to food. [Laughs]

**Earlonne:** [23:49] It's always gonna go back to food because I was stuck on you was bringing the same thing again for like ten years. [Nigel laughs]

**Nigel:** [23:54] Well, I would say, two things that I would say about our relationship changing is one, is that we get to share food, which I love, and two, we get to travel together, which is really fun.

**Earlonne:** [24:03] Oh yeah. You know I love getting on planes.

**Nigel:** [24:03] [Laughs] And, you know I we're perfect travel companions?

**Earlonne:** [24:07] Yup. 'Cause I like the window and Nigel likes the aisle.

**Nigel:** [24:11] [Laughs] Exactly. And I think other things that have changed is, like, I get to see you in all different clothes...

**Earlonne:** [24:16] We to get to sit up and just call each other, like, hey, what's up? What you doing? What's happenin'?

**Nigel:** [24:19] I know! It's really cool. You get to come to my house and just show up.

**Earlonne:** [24:20] I learned that Nigel has the most beautiful view around the corner from her house. [Nigel laughs] I sit there and I look at it, it's of the San Francisco Bay. You could just pull up and sit there and just kick it.

**Nigel:** [24:34] Well, I know there's going to be more to learn about you...

**Earlonne:** [24:38] Mhm.

**Nigel:** [24:39] [Laughs] ...and I know we're gonna have more travels and most importantly we're going to have many more meals together.

**Earlonne:** [24:44] Definitely. [Nigel laughs] Definitely.

**Nigel:** [24:46] Okay, well I'm going to thank you right now and I am going to, um, catch up—

**Earlonne:** [24:49] Head back in and holla at New York.

**Nigel:** [24:51] Exactly.

**Earlonne:** [24:51] Tell son I said, whaddup. [Nigel laughs]

[24:53] [Dramatic piano chord, followed by industrial whirring and door closing shut]

[24:58] [Soft, melancholy piano rendition of theme music begins]

**Nigel:** [25:04] Now, this rendition of our theme song, you heard at the top of the show. And it's really something special.

**New York:** [25:09] Yup. That's because it came to us from piano player and *Ear Hustle* listener, Karen Kitto.

[Soft, melancholy piano rendition of theme music begins ends]

**Nigel:** [25:21] A while back, we asked listeners to make their own rendition of our theme song and New York, I gotta tell you, we got some great ones.

**New York:** [25:27] So I heard. [Soft piano music begins] Listeners from all over the world sent in their remixes, using saxophones, violins, synthesizers—

**Nigel:** [25:35] Yep, yep, yep. And I got my harp. [Soft piano music begins and transitions into harp music]

**New York:** [25:38] That's right. You got your harp.

**Nigel:** [25:40] And not just one but two. The one you're hearing now comes from listener, Cynabel.

[25:46] [Dreamlike harp rendition of theme music with soft vocalizing]

**Nigel:** [25:57] This next harp piece comes to us from Lynda McNeil.

[26:01] [Ascending scale on harp, followed by gentle plucking rendition of theme music begins]

**Nigel:** [26:16] There were really a lot of great tracks that came in and truly I enjoyed going through all of them.

**New York:** [26:21] The ones I heard, sounded awesome.

**Nigel:** [26:30] So we had two guys on our sound design team, Antwan Williams, and Rhashiyd Zinnamon listen and talk about their favorites. [Gentle harp rendition of theme music ends]

**Antwan Williams:** [26:33] First up, we got...

**Both Antwan and Rhashiyd:** [26:35] [Clapping for emphasis] KidMental

**Antwan Williams:** [26:37] baby!

**Rhashiyd Zinnamon:** [26:37] Yup, say that.

**Antwan Williams:** [26:38] Let's go.

[26:40] [Beatboxing and vocal rendition of theme music, singing "This is Ear Hustle"]

**Antwan:** [26:57] [clapping between words] He goes so crazy!

**Rhashiyd:** [26:59] Super dope.

**Antwan:** [26:59] Is that one person?

**Rhashiyd:** [27:00] Yeah.

**Antwan:** [27:00] Wait, are we sure that's one person?

**Rhashiyd:** [27:02] Check the status.

**Antwan:** [27:02] [Rhashiyd laughs] I feel like it's like *America's Got Talent*, like a group. But, but seriously, man, the creativity in that piece, man, was out of this world.

**Rhashiyd:** [27:11] The way he layered the vocals...

**Antwan:** [27:13] Shout out, man.

**Rhashiyd:** [27:14] ...fire.

**Antwan:** [27:14] KidMental. So dope.

**Rhashiyd:** [27:16] So fire. [laughs] I liked that.

**Antwan:** [27:18] So, so beautiful, man.

**Rhashiyd:** [27:19] Yeah

**Antwan:** [27:19] Thank you.

[27:21] [Soft synth enters]

**Antwan:** [27:24] Now this right here is by Anthony Barilla. And this piece, honestly

**Rhashiyd:** [27:29] Absolutely.

**Antwan:** [27:30] This music is just beautiful, man.

**Rhashiyd:** [27:32] Absolutely. It's tranquil, it's peaceful...

**Antwan:** [27:34] Absolutely

**Rhashiyd:** [27:34] ...and it's anticipatory.

[27:36] [Soft, piano rendition of theme music with synth accompaniment begins]

**Antwan:** [27:39] And it's very hopeful too.

**Rhashiyd:** [27:41] He took the integrity of the *Ear Hustle* theme song and just expounded on it, expanded on it to the point where it's like another level. New dimension. [laughs]

[27:53] [Soft, piano rendition of theme music with synth accompaniment continues]

**Antwan:** [28:10] Alright y'all. We got one more. [Dramatic piano chord followed by hip-hop synth rendition of theme music quietly in the background]

**Antwan:** [28:12] This one right here, man...

**Rhashiyd:** [28:14] Woo!

**Antwan:** [28:14] ...is one of my favorite, hands down.

**Rhashiyd:** [28:17] Hands down.

**Antwan:** [28:18] This took me back to the original, man. It got that grittiness. It got that grind.

**Rhashiyd:** [28:22] Filthy.

**Antwan:** [28:23] And this is from a thirteen-year-old listener.

**Rhashiyd:** [28:25] Thirteen-year-old phenom.

**Antwan:** [28:28] And he go by Rudy Van.

**Rhashiyd:** [28:30] Shout out to Rudy, man.

**Antwan:** [28:31] Man, Rudy, keep doing what you doing, man.

**Rhashiyd:** [28:32] Stay hustlin'.

**Antwan:** [28:33] You powerful bro.

**Rhashiyd:** [28:35] Let's go.

[28:36] [Hip-hop synth rendition of theme music]

**Rhashiyd:** [28:52] Rudy Van, you the man, son! Keep it poppin'

**Antwan:** To everybody else who submitted a remix, much love. And for those we didn't play this time. Hold tight. We're gonna feature more listener remixes in future episodes.

[29:07] [Upbeat buzzing, percussive synth beat]

**Nigel:** [29:14] Well, that's all the kites were gonna answer this time. We'll do another "Catch a Kite" episode next season, so please keep those questions coming.

**New York:** [29:21] To find out how to send us a kite, go to our website at [www.earhustlesq.com](http://www.earhustlesq.com).

**Nigel:** [29:27] Thanks to everyone who helped answer listener questions about life inside, Angel Villafan, Tommy Wickerd, Norman Willhoite, Deanna Sardo, Timothy Hicks, and Juan Haines.

**New York:** [29:38] And thanks to Chapple and Tracy, and, Ray and Bertha for helping us with the outside questions.

**Nigel:** [29:43] *Ear Hustle* is produced on the inside by me, Nigel Poor, Rahsaan “New York” Thomas, Pat Mesiti-Miller, and John “Yahya” Johnson.

**Earlonne:** [29:51] Our outside producers are me, Earlonne Woods and Ol’ Boy, Bruce Wallace.

**New York:** [29:55] This episode was scored with music by Antwan Williams, David Jassy, Rhashiyd Zinnamon, and our listeners.

**Nigel:** [30:02] Thank you so much for contributing to the show.

**New York:** [30:05] Erin Wade is our digital producer, Curtis Fox is our senior producer, and Julie Shapiro is our executive producer for Radiotopia.

**Nigel:** [30:14] We want to thank Warden Ron Davis and as you know, every episode has to be approved by this guy here.

**Lt. Sam Robinson:** [30:20] [Singing] *Do-re. Do-re-mi-fa-so.* My voice don’t sound jacked up now.

**New York:** [30:25] It’s slightly off, but it’s good. It’s good.

**Lt. Sam Robinson:** [30:27] Yeah, yeah. And so as I have for dozens of episodes before now, I do approve this episode. And this is Lieutenant Sam Robinson, the public information officer at San Quentin State Prison.

**New York:** [30:40] Yes. [Laughs] Another one got past you. [Both laugh]

**Nigel:** [30:48] Next time on *Ear Hustle*, what it’s like at the end of the road.

**Voice 13:** [30:53] When I first arrived, uh, the bus drivers and stuff, they would say, okay, like, “end of the road.” I looked around and said like, man, I’m actually here. I am one that could actually be put to death at any time.

[31:03] [Bright, percussive synth begins]

**Nigel:** [31:06] Check out our website, [earhustlesq.com](http://earhustlesq.com), where you can sign up for our newsletter, see pictures of people in our stories, and it's also a place to buy *Ear Hustle* sticker packs, mugs and t-shirts. So please check it out. And you can also follow us on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook @EarHustleSQ.

**Earlonne:** [31:25] This podcast was made possible with support from the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, working to redesign the justice system by creative power and opportunity for communities impacted by incarceration.

**New York:** [31:36] *Ear Hustle* is a proud member of Radiotopia from PRX, a collection of the best podcasts around. Hear more at [radiotopia.fm](http://radiotopia.fm).

**Nigel:** [31:44] I'm Nigel Poor.

**New York:** [31:46] I'm Rahsaan "New York" Thomas.

**Earlonne:** [31:47] And I'm Earlonne Woods. Thanks for listening. And just a heads up, [Bright, percussive synth ends] our next episode is going to be out in three weeks instead of two. We appreciate your patience.

**Juan:** [31:58] More lawyers need to go to acting school. Had my attorney went to acting school, if she could've just shed a tear. If she could have just been like that dramatic reverse fist to the sky, saying, why would you put this poor man through this trial when he's such a decent human being? But all the time I was a bank robber.

**Voice 14:** [32:25] Ugh!

**END OF EPISODE.**