



Episode 43: Tired of Running
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Anna Hicks: [00:00:00] Hi, this is Anna Hicks, illustrator of the new limited-edition Ear Hustle t-shirt. The following episode of Ear Hustle contains language and depictions of violence that may not be appropriate for all listeners. Discretion is advised. [transition sound montage, includes sounds of metal clacking, muffled voice over radio]

Javier: I had seen a movie and they say, when you're looking for something, 90% of people never look up, right? [soft atmospheric tones come in] And it just so happened there was a tree right there. So I climbed the tree and I hid out in this tree for about a hour while the police were looking for me. I got to the point where I was so cold, there's like a helicopter flying over me. The spotlight is like so shining on me and I'm like, "Okay, they're going to see me. They're going to see me" and they did not see me. [atmospheric tones fade out and into beat]

Earlone Woods: And that is where are we going to leave Javier for now.

Nigel Poor: Hanging out in a tree. E, I'm picturing a koala bear. I know a lot of guys in San Quentin have stories about running from the police.

Earlone: Yep. You skip a court date. Maybe you head out of town for a while. Cops are trying to track you down, so when you're locked up, you hear a lot of stories about life on the run. Especially this cat here:

Trevor Woods: You know, you have different levels of “on the run.” You have one dude, might have – say he got a dope case, he jumped bail or whatever it is so he on the run. They not looking for you for real, for real. You see what I’m saying? My on the run, I have five different agencies chasing me. You see what I’m saying? I had the bail bondsman, the bail bondsmen insurance, the fugitive task force, Culver City PD, the feds, the Marshals. So it was a different kind of run. They were serious.

Nigel: That’s Trevor Woods. He’s been on the show before and he’s also Earlonne’s brother.

Earlonne: Yep. He was on the run for four whole years.

Trevor: I ended up paying a thousand dollars for a fake license. Bought about ten, twelve cell phones, prepaid. Gave them to all my family members because I knew the police were on the phones as well. And this what law enforcement know sometime. They know you not gonna cut your family off. You see what I’m saying? They know this.

Nigel: And you know what I remember hearing about Trevor? When he was on the run, he was still around his family a lot.

Earlonne: Oh yeah, he’s a family dude. You know, being on the run didn’t change that at all.

Trevor: I didn’t cut my family off. I still took my boys everywhere, shopping, everything. I still did everything like I wasn’t on the run. You know, when you’re dealing with your children, no matter what situation it is, those are your children. So I still had duties to do. I still had to get them to school. I still had to pick them up, took them shopping, haircuts, got them into sports. So I’m a father, father, not just the word, I was a father. [abstract industrial sounds as transition]

Rahsaan “New York” Thomas: What was the best day you had on the run? Best moment.

Troy Talib Young: June 26, 1990. I was able to spend this particular day with my girl and my son.

Earlonne: This is Troy Talib Young.

Troy: My son was five months at that time. He’s thirty years old today. Held him, play with him. I forgot I was on the run. I forgot that law enforcement was looking for me. That was the best day.

New York: You remember the exact day?

Troy: Yes. Exact day. I haven't had many memorable moments with my son, so the ones I did have, I've always locked the dates in my mind. [theme song comes in]

Nigel: I'm Nigel Poor

Earlonne: And I'm Earlonne Woods. This is Ear Hustle from PRX's Radiotopia

Nigel: And on this episode, we're talking about life before prison.

Earlonne: You've committed a crime, the police are looking for you, and you're trying not to get caught.

Nigel: But, the longer you're on the run, the more that people close to you get pulled along too. [theme fades out]

John “Yahya” Johnson: What was it like for your family for you to be on a run?

Earlonne: This is Yahya. Until recently, he was one of our producers on the inside.

Nigel: If you missed the good news on our last episode, Yayha has been released from San Quentin.

Earlonne: Indeed.

Yahya: I mean you on the run for a serious violent case.

Troy: My siblings were scared because they knew that I had made a vow not to return to prison. [00:05:00] I had spoken to my mother while I was on the run. I called her one time. And she told me that LAPD had come by her house several different times looking for me. I was so paranoid and nervous. I stayed on the phone less than a minute. I'm thinking that they got the phone bugged and they couldn't trace it if I don't stay on longer than a minute. I told her I was okay and I told her, “Don't worry, I'll be alright.” Um, that was the only time I spoken to my mother out of eight months while I was running from LAPD. [soft tones come in]

Yahya: Did anybody in your family try to encourage you to turn yourself in?

Troy: Yes, my mother did.

Yahya: What did she say to you?

Troy: She told me that she was worried about me. She was scared that I would die out there in the streets. She convinced me to speak to a reverend named Reverend Brown. He conveyed to me that my mother was worried and

she wanted me to turn myself in so I could stay alive. At that time, I wasn't trying to hear it. I had a belief system. You don't talk to the police, you don't turn yourself in. Whatever happens, allow it to happen. [tones fade out]

New York: How'd you get caught?

Troy: September 15th, 1990 I came back to Los Angeles, went to a relative's home. It was a party. It was an anniversary of my uncle's home. A lot of my family's there. My mother, nieces, nephews, aunties, cousins, my great uncle. Long story short, police knocked on the door, I opened the door, laughed at him, closed the door. My uncle asked me what was going on. I said, "The police out there and I'm not going back to jail." Family looked at me, no one said anything until my great uncle. He said, "Look, now if you can't do this, man, just go ahead and get yourself up. We'll make sure you'd be okay." [soft tones come in] Took my pistol, which was a 45, out my pocket, took my last drink, put the pistol in the trash can and walked through the front door and allowed LAPD to arrest me.

New York: What made you change your mind in that moment and turn yourself in or allow them to arrest you?

Troy: I was in a home – my uncle's home. My mother was there. I was not going to do anything to allow them to be harmed. [bright, dreamy tones come in and fades out]

Nigel: Can you describe the first time you saw Javier? First time you laid eyes on him.

Reshell: The first time I laid eyes on him was in high school. And I told my friends, "Who's that guy?" He was new. And I'm like, "I'm gonna get to know that guy and that guy is going to be my boyfriend." [laughs]

Nigel: Wow. What about him attracted you that quickly?

Reshell: Um, his eyes. I loved the color of his eyes and just the way he was different from everyone else. It was like suburbs and he came from Oakland, so he stood out.

Earlone: This is Reshell. And Javier, the guy she's talking about, he's the guy that was hugging the tree like a koala bear at the top of the show.

Nigel: Reshell's in her forties. She has long brown hair. She's really carefully made-up. And Earlone, to be honest, I remember the first time I met her, she was kind of intimidating. I mean, she reminded me of one of those popular girls in school who was not nice to me. But, as soon as you start talking to her, I realized that impression is totally wrong. She's super warm and open and really easy to talk to. [tones fade out]

[to Reshell] And describe yourself when you met him, what were you like?

Reshell: I was quiet. My mother was very strict with us. After school it was like straight home. No friends at home. You do your homework. You do your chores and that's it.

Earlone: Was he a bad boy?

Reshell: Not so much a bad boy. But he knew what he wanted, and he was like the center of attention. Like everybody wanted to be Javier's friend.

Earlone: So what made you fall in love with him?

Reshell: The way he treated me. He treated me like I was number one, like in his world.

Nigel: I really wanted to talk with Reshell because stories about being on the run and no offense to your brother, E, but you know, there's always a bit of swagger in them.

Earlone: Hey, that's true. I mean, being on the run is movie shit and, in the movies, it's glamorous, being an outlaw, you know, all that shit.

Nigel: But as we heard with Trevor and Troy, [00:10:00] fugitives pull a lot of people along with them. And when a guy goes on the run, there's usually a woman who has her own version of what went down. And it sounds pretty different. [soft tones come in]

Reshell: In my senior year of high school, I found out I was pregnant.

Nigel: At first Reshell's mom wasn't sure Javier was gonna step up, but he did.

Reshell: He graduated early and came back to Oakland, found a job, found, a house...

Nigel: About a year after their son was born, the two of them decided to move back to the suburbs, where Reshell grew up.

[to Reshell] And then what was your life like there?

Reshell: It was great. It was like the best life I could have imagined.

Nigel: What made it so great?

Reshell: The way we were raising our son, the way our marriage was going. My son was in every sport. Javier was a coach for my son's soccer team. We were always the parents that were getting snacks or taking them to get pizza after a game. I was like, "I'm living the dream. I loved being that mom."

Nigel: Yeah, yeah.

Reshell: And our house was like the house that every kid wanted to come to. My son was the only one, so he had, you know, games. He had quads, he had dirt bikes. We were full of kids every weekend. And I loved that. I was like, "This is like the American dream." [tones fade out]

Nigel: What are some adjectives you would use to describe what Javier was like as a husband and partner?

Reshell: He was like the man of the house. He took care of everything. I literally never had to do anything. My money that I made working was money that I can spend on myself.

Nigel: What were typical gifts that Javier gave you on your birthday or Christmas?

Reshell: My favorite was like Guess back in the day. Every year I was getting like a Guess watch of the year, clothes, cars. For Valentine's Day, I don't know if this is appropriate, but I wanted implants. [Nigel affirms] So for a Valentine's Day, I got what I wanted.

Nigel: Hey, she got what she wanted.

Earlone: And Javier, his life was going pretty good too.

Javier: I was living a really good life. I worked for BART, which is the Bay Area rapid transit here. I was a utility worker there. I had just bought my second home.

Nigel: Wait, how old were you?

Javier: 32. I was in my prime.

Nigel: In his prime. E, this guy's got swagger. Did you know Javier in San Quentin?

Earlone: I have no clue.

Nigel: How could you miss him? He had like a shaved head, big personality, you know, even you walked into the room, he kind of took up a lot of space, you know what I'm saying?

Earlone: Nigel, you just described at least 30% of that population. [Nigel laughs]

Nigel: Oh, you mean like prison bravado? Yeah, I guess you're right. Okay. Anyway. Javier and Reshell had a happy life at home. They've got a lot of

stuff. Their son's friends are always over, but that doesn't mean they were home bodies.

Earlone: Nope. Javier and Reshell loved to party.

Javier: Had this like little crew that all always go out on the boat. We had a few jet skis and like four or five boats deep. So we'd go out all together...

Nigel: Like where, on the Delta?

Javier: On the Delta. [Nigel affirms] Yeah. The Delta is like kind of like a party zone, which is where the incident happened.

Earlone: Nyge

Nigel: Mmhmm

Earlone: That's in your neck woods. What's the Delta?

Nigel: Well, actually the Delta is about an hour away from San Francisco and it's this big area of marshes with all these connected waterways. It's super popular for boating and back when all of this went down, there used to be this bar in the Delta called Lost Isle. And people would come dock their boats, hang out and basically just drink beer in the sun. [quiet ambient noise from inside a bar, voices chattering in the background]

[to Reshell] Can you tell us from your perspective what happened that day?

Reshell: All I remember is us getting to this bar on the Delta. You had to be 21 and over to get on. But we had friends that had her daughter and her friend in a boat.

Nigel: So everyone was having a good time until a dad of one of the teenage girls heard that some guy was hitting on his daughter.

Reshell: Of course, Javier's like, "What? Who's trying to get with your daughter?" These guys walk in. These big like Mexican guys with tattoos, and he was like, "Those guys." And Javier is like, "*oh man.*"

Javier: My wife's like, "Let's just go, let's go, let's go." She kept on [00:15:00] this whole I wanna leave thing.

Reshell: Even people we weren't with, they were like, "They look like they're going to cause some trouble."

Javier: Respectfully, I tell him, "Hey, can I help you guys? You guys need something?" And they're like, "Nah, we're just here, kicking back, what's the problem or what?" I said, "Well, you know, this is my friend's daughter." I said, "She's a good looking girl but she's 16!" And they were respectful, you know,

they said, "No, it's cool. Don't trip." I said, "Look, nino, no hard feelings. Let me buy you guys a drink."

Earlone: For a minute, it looks like things are cool.

Nigel: Then Javier's friend comes running back from the bathroom. He says he's been jumped. [tones fade to silence abruptly]

Earlone: By those same guys.

Javier: The guys come running out. I'm like, "Hey, what's the problem?" I'm Mexican. I look like super white. [laughs] But they're Mexican too, right? So then I'm like arguing back and forth with them and the dude's calling me punk ass white boy, and he's like talking all this shit to me. And I tell him, "Hey, well what the fuck happened? What's the problem?" He say, oh, you know, "Fuck you, what're you going to do?" He starts throwing up his little hood and I'm talking shit back. You know, we're exchanging words, you know, nobody's being real nice.

Nigel: All of a sudden, one of the guys jumps Javier. Javier says at that instant, he sees a knife on the ground, picks it up and ends up stabbing him. [low, melancholy tones come in]

Earlone: Then, another guy starts messing with Reshell.

Javier: He pushes my wife. So I grab him and I stuck him four times too. Everybody's like, "He has a knife! He has a knife!" I take off running.

Reshell: He went one way. They took me another way, and I just remember running to a friend's boat. And being put on the boat. And when it finally was like everything was registering, I was like, "Oh my god, what the fuck happened?" [tones fade out]

Earlone: Javier spent that night running from the cops, hiding on a riverbank and up in a tree like you heard before.

Nigel: And Reshell was a mess. Her friends took her to another bar where she did vodka shots until she was blind drunk. And the next morning she was woken up by pounding at the door. [door knocking sound] And of course it was the police. [soft tones come in]

Reshell: They were just telling me that Javier killed somebody and somebody else was probably going to die as well. And, um, I remember them showing me pictures of the guy that had passed away and that freaked me out.

Nigel: Of him dead?

Reshell: Yes.

Earlone: That's what they do.

Nigel: Woah. Bleeding? [Earlone affirms] Yeah. When you finally understood what had happened, like how did you take that information in? [tones fade out]

Reshell: I didn't want to believe it and I couldn't believe it. I guess I was in denial.

Nigel: It was two weeks before Reshell saw Javier again. The two of them went to see a lawyer in Oakland. Javier agreed to turn himself in. But then, it got tricky.

Earlone: Javier told us that the guys from the bar, friends of the guys he stabbed, started threatening his family.

Javier: They went to the school like 12 deep. Looking for my son and their dumb ass is like asking everybody who my son was. They asked teachers and all that shit. They found out where I lived and they've went and vandalized my cars. And my family was like totally scared. When that happened, I figured we can't stay here.

Earlone: Javier's plan was for them all to go to Mexico where he has some distant relatives and hide out there for a while.

Nigel: And Reshell, she's like, no way. [soft tones come in]

Reshell: I wasn't going to pick up our family, my son, and rip him out of the only thing he knew and go to a place that we don't know about, um, of a country that my son doesn't even know the language. So I was like, "I'm sorry, but this is as far as I'm going. And whatever you do, you're going to do. I don't want to know where, I don't know, want to know anything beyond this point."

Nigel: Were you angry? Were you just in disbelief?

Reshell: I was numb. I had no emotion. I had no feeling. I was just like in disbelief that this was even happening. Like I'm gonna wake up from this horrible dream. [Nigel affirms] [tones fade out] The night before he was packing to leave and we were saying our goodbyes, [00:20:00] my son was like, "We're not leaving with my dad?" I'm like, "No, we're not leaving with him." And the look on my son's face like got be thinking, [soft beat come in] "Am I doing the right thing? Am I going to tear my family apart and not know when we're going to see my husband, or my son see his father again?" I didn't know.

Nigel: When we come back from the break, Reshell makes the biggest decision of her life. [beat fades out]

Reshell: I told my husband, like, "We're going with you, we're packing." And he was like, "What? You guys are coming with me?" I'm like, "Yeah, we're coming."

Nigel: What were you giving up to do this? [soft tones come in]

Reshell: Everything. It was like, I'm going to leave with him and we're not going to be able to have any contact with our family.

Nigel: Was that clear to you?

Reshell: I don't really think it was. [Nigel affirms]

Nigel: But I mean, you were walking away from your mom, your family, his mom, your house, everything you owned.

Reshell: Everything.

Nigel: You had like – what did you have with you? Like what were the physical things that you had with you?

Reshell: We had photo albums and clothes. That was it.

Nigel: Oof, E. This is huge. Reshell was about to walk away from everything. And we were talking about this earlier about how being on the run in the movies is always like kind of exciting.

Earlone: Yeah. Kind of glamorous even.

Nigel: But when you hear the choices Reshell had to make for herself and for her son, all I see is the chaos and the terror of the situation. And there's absolutely nothing sexy about it.

[to Reshell] So you just show up in a car with three suitcases and then you're just gonna start your life over? [Reshell affirms] What did you, I'm sure you're still in shock at this point, and, my questions aren't meant to sound judgmental, but what did you think was going to happen when you got – did you have any sort of idea in your head of what was going to be the next part of your life?

Reshell: No, no clue. I was literally living day by day. [Nigel affirms]

Nigel: They end up in this tiny town where Javier had some distant relatives. And this place was really another world to them.

Reshell: No stoplights. People are still riding on horses and mules. [laughs] Yeah. It was like dirt roads.

Nigel: I'm imagining it's a small town so everybody knows who people are. Like weren't people like, "Who are these people?"

Reshell: Yes. Especially with me because, or me and Javier, we both have tattoos and there, women having tattoos it was like a no, no. I have a lot of tattoos. So when I would go out and people would just like stare at me, and I even had a lady through holy water at me.

Javier: My wife hated it. There's no Starbucks, there's no nothing. I mean, I had to go like to the next town to get a Red Bull. You know, there's like nothing there. One main street that goes like from one side of the town to the other one gas station at the beginning of that street and one gas station at the end of that street. And nothing. Me and my wife even walked faster than everybody there. I mean, it was crazy. And then we're all like tatted up, right? So we're like, everybody's looking at, my wife is like blasted, like I'm blasted. Right. So everybody's like, they knew who I was.

Nigel: Did they know you were American? [Javier affirms] And that you were on the run?

Javier: Yep.

Nigel: Because you just stood out so much?

Javier: If people are there, they speak perfect English, you know, they grew up in the United States. And they don't ever leave? They're on the run, bro. [soft lo-fi electric guitar comes in]

Reshell: I want to say for a good month or two, all I did was cry every day and every single day I just cried. But I had a snap out of it and try to make a comfortable life for my son. For me, there was like no work. Like a woman's place was at home taking care of children and cleaning and cooking. It was my son and myself in this house and I didn't really leave [00:25:00] because I didn't know how to speak Spanish. And he would come home and be like, "Well, did you go to the store today to buy food? I'm like, "No, I was waiting for you because I don't understand this stupid money, for one, and I'm like, "I can't even speak to the people at the store.". I had a lot of anger toward Javier. I would throw it in his face like, "I gave up everything for you." I mean, of course it puts a big strain on our, our marriage. [tones fade out] [Nigel affirms]

Nigel: To me that sounds like death. It's like the worst stereotype of a 1950s housewife. I mean, you're stuck at home. No job. No friends.

Earlone: Yeah, I get it. She's got nothing

Nigel: And sure, things were hard for Javier, but I also get the sense that this was kind of an adventure for him. He didn't have to be stuck at home all day. He got to be out and about in the world, enjoying himself.

Earlone: Like there was this, one day he went out to buy some celery.

Javier: I go to the store and I tell the lady I need, you know, I don't – how do the fuck do you call celery in Spanish? So I'm trying to describe celery to the lady at the store: "You know, it's like green. It's like a stick and it has like leaves on it." *Es cómo un palito verde y tiene cómo hojas arriba.* And she's laughing at me. She said, *¿cómo que un palito verde con hojas arriba, es cómo un palito y tiene hojas arriba y se come en cómo esaladas y se hace con caldo de pollo...?*The whole time, [Nigel laughs] you know, I think she pretty much knew what the hell I was talking about. She's just like trying to get her fucking laugh at me.

Earlone: But Javier is also working a lot. They needed money.

Javier: It's hard to make living in Mexico. It's very, very hard. Like incredibly hard.

Nigel: He got a job working construction, but it pays shit and everything is built by hand.

Javier: So you're digging trenches to lay foundation and you're doing it with a shovel. You don't got a trencher. You're doing everything by hand. And I worked six-day work weeks and I was making 900 pesos a week, which is like \$75. And you can spend that in one trip to the grocery store.

Earlone: So Javier needed to figure out a way to bring in some more money.

Nigel: He'd been sharing food with the guys at his construction site and they loved his cooking. So he got the idea to open a taco stand.

Javier: Comida Estilo California, right? And everybody's like, "What the fuck is California style food?" Nobody had burritos like I had. Nobody had super nachos and nobody had these giant quesadillas. I was able to stack some money up. And figure, fuck it, my wife can't take it here anymore. I gotta go. I already fucked up our life enough. I want to go somewhere where it's a little bit better. [soft tones come in]

Nigel: So they came up with a plan. Javier figured the next closest place where Reshell might be a little bit happier was Puerto Vallarta, about four hours from where they lived.

Javier: So you drive in. First thing we see is Starbucks, and my wife is like, "Oh hell yeah, I can do this."

Reshell: When I got there and I seen Walmart, Costco, Carl's Jr, I'm like, "I am not leaving." I'm like, "This is where we're living. If you like it or not, I'll stay here." I felt like so happy again. I felt alive. "That's it. I'm not going back. If you

guys want to go back, you guys can go back. I'm staying here." Starbucks bought me.

Earlone: And what do you have in your hand?

Reshell: Starbucks. [Earlone, Nigel and Reshell laugh]

Nigel: Do you remember what you ordered the first time?

Reshell: Yeah, it was a venti raspberry, white mocha, extra hot, with an extra shot.

Earlone: So they decided to pack up and move to Puerto Vallarta for good. Before they left, they told a few people their plans. [tones fade out]

Javier: And they told me straight up, "Don't go live there because you're going to get caught. I said, "Well, fuck it. I'mma get caught then. I knew I was going to get caught one day.

Nigel: On the second day they're there, Javier found a bartending job right on the beach. And pretty soon he is the guy about town. He's recommending restaurants, chatting up the guys at the front desks at hotels, taking tourists to strip clubs, and he's getting a taste of all that action.

Earlone: Hey, Javier knows how to hustle.

Nigel: The two of them settled into a life. Reshell was so much happier and she got a job too. It wasn't quite like their life back home, but it was a hell of a lot closer.

Reshell: It was starting to feel normal again.

Earlone: Eventually, Javier made enough money that he wanted to open his own place.

Javier: And I did! I opened my own bar, a block off the beach in a nice area. I designed it, you know, I painted it like all this tropical scene and business took off.

Nigel: And for about a year, this was a really happy time for them. But then Javier started partying a little too much.

Reshell: Drinking, every single day. Not coming home for [00:30:00] a day or two. Wanting to drink, drink, drink and party, party, party. And blackout to where he didn't remember anything. So I kicked him out.

Nigel: So he was – he pretty much bottomed out. [soft, ominous tones come in]

Reshell: Correct. [Nigel affirms] He brought everything down. The bar, he – I mean, he ran it to the ground.

Nigel: Towards the end, did you recognize anything in him?

Reshell: No. He was a totally different person. He didn't care about anything. I even at the end told him I was leaving and he basically was like, "I don't give a fuck what you do."

Nigel: Reshell felt Javier really hadn't dealt with what had happened that night in the Delta and now it was finally catching up with him.

Reshell: I think he felt like his past hit him in the face finally, like he finally let it all sink in. [tones fade out]

Javier: It's always in your head. I mean, I damn near every night I would go sit on a beach, watch the sunset, fall behind the water. And tell myself, it was probably like maybe about might be the last day I get to see the sun, you know, in this environment. And you kind of always live with that knowledge that you're going to get caught one day, you know? And you try to avoid thinking about that and you try to make a life as best as you can, but the reality is, is that you pretty much know.

Reshell: It was really messing his head up. [Nigel affirms] And he ended up being a person that I didn't even know and I didn't even want to be around.

Nigel: Reshell really thought about leaving Javier and going home. But by now, her son was rooted in Mexico and he didn't want to leave, so she decided to give him one more chance and try to save their marriage.

Earlonne: Then one day, the two of them were out on a stroll.

Javier: A van pulls up. Two dudes jump out with AR 15s and a plain clothes guy. And I walk right past them. I don't even think nothing about it. Well, the guy starts talking to me in broken English, "Excuse me, excuse me. I need to talk to you. I need to talk to you." And I'm like, "What?" I turned around. *¿Me está hablando a mi?* "Are you talking to me?" He's like, *¿Oh, hablas español?* I'm like, "yeah, *hablo español.*"

Nigel: The cops asked him where he was from. Javier said, "I'm from here!" But they kept pressing him for ID.

Javier: You fit a description of a shoplifter. There has been shoplifting at the store called Liverpool, which is like a Dillard's or a Macy's or something like that.

Nigel: Javier knew he hadn't shoplifted anything.

Earlone: But he'd been in Mexico for a while and he thought he could get out of it.

Javier: You say, *¿Cómo vamos a arreglar esto?* How are we gonna fix this? And that automatically they know you're going to pay. So I tell him, "How are we going to fix this?" He's like, "Are you in trouble or something? Why are you trying? Why are you trying to leave?" I said, "Look, man, I ain't got time for this shit."

Nigel: And were you scared?

Javier: Yeah, hell yeah! I was trippin'!

Nigel: What was your wife doing?

Javier: What's going through my mind is I'm gonna run, right? But I got my wife there. And in Mexico, if you run, they shoot your ass.

Nigel: It turned out the cops knew exactly who he was. They'd been looking for him for weeks. The shoplifting thing, that was just a ploy to get Javier into the van.

Earlone: Which they did. Eventually they took him to Immigration.

Javier: And he does the ink roller on my hand, and when he did that, I'm really thinking, "Oh, it's a wrap. Running fugitive for murder from the United States. I know US Marshals is looking for me and US Marshals is definitely hooked up with Interpol. So I'm like, "It's over." [soft tones come in]

Nigel: We've talked to a bunch of guys who got caught after being on the run for a while and I mean, you think they would be pissed.

Earlone: Yeah, but I think it's more complicated than that, Nyge. I mean, having to watch your back like that at all times is really exhausting.

Nigel: For some guys, getting caught, it's like you can finally breathe. Like Troy, who we heard from at the top of the show.

New York: And so how did it feel to get put in handcuffs?

Troy: Actually, I was relieved because I was tired of running. There was no joy to it. I was tired of eating fast foods. I was tired of looking over my shoulder. I was out of control.

Nigel: E, did your brother feel that way?

Earlone: Hell no, but I did. You know, every time I saw something on the news that said "fugitive killed" my heart stopped for a second. You know, I was worried it was my brother they were talking about. So when he got

captured, it kind of brought some peace to my heart because he didn't get killed out there in the streets.

Nigel: [to Reshell] Was there any part of you [00:35:00] that was relieved that he got caught?

Reshell: Yes.

Nigel: Can you talk about that?

Reshell: I don't know if it was like being a coward, but I didn't have to be the one to leave.

Nigel: I keep going back to how much you gave up for him and how difficult it was. And so I wonder if there was any part of you like was, "Fuck yeah. He made, he finally got it." Is that a nice thing to think? [Reshell laughs] And it's not nice for me to say it, but I just wonder. It's like you really went through so much.

Reshell: Yes, I did. And yeah, it was. 'Cause like I said, our marriage was already strained to where I'm like, "Thank fucking God." I couldn't, I couldn't do it anymore.

Nigel: And what did you think you were coming home to?

Reshell: To nothing. I didn't even know where I was coming home to.

Earlone: Six years before, they left the U.S. with pretty much just whatever they could carry. Now, they were leaving Mexico the same way.

Reshell: With another three suitcases of our belongings, left our house, furnished with everything, TVs and clothes that we couldn't bring back and started all over again. [low tones come in]

Earlone: Javier and Reshell came back to the States. Javier went straight to prison, charged with manslaughter and sentenced to nine years. He eventually landed at San Quentin State Prison.

Nigel: Reshell, she was already standing by her guy for six years before he even went to prison. If it were me, you know what I be thinking?

Earlone: Yep. You be thinking, it's my turn.

Nigel: Exactly. [tones fade out]

Reshell: I needed to find myself. I didn't want to have any contact with him. I didn't want him to call me. If he was gonna write me letters, I wasn't gonna write back.

Nigel: Do you know what I feel like should happen here? [Earlonne affirms] What would happen if this was the movie version. So Reshell would finally get her time, be able to focus on herself. Javier serves his time in prison. Then he gets out, the two of them fall in love all over again, and they start on the next phase of their life.

Earlonne: Right. As equals.

Nigel: Exactly.

Earlonne: But, something else happened. They both got really sick.

Nigel: Almost as soon as Javier came back to the States, he was diagnosed with stage four colon cancer. And at almost the exact same time, Reshell finds out she's really sick too with another type of cancer that's been spreading quickly.

Reshell: So there is really no time for me to find myself. [melancholic tones come in]

Nigel: So I mean taking care of this as a huge part of her life [Reshell affirms] I'm guessing.

Reshell: It's taken over. [Nigel affirms] I haven't fully gotten my life back, but I'm happy. I can finally say I'm happy now.

Nigel: And what makes you happy now?

Reshell: Having grandkids.

Earlonne: That's what's up.

Reshell: Yeah. A two-year-old grandson and a three-month-old granddaughter. They keep me going, and if I am having a bad day, I can just – them going crazy at home makes me happy. It's not about all the toys and money and I mean, all that is nice, but I don't want that anymore. I am happy with where I live. I still love my clothes. I still love pampering myself, but I don't like all the extras anymore and I don't care about the extras anymore. [tones fade out]

Nigel: And so what's going to happen in a month?

Reshell: Javier will be getting out.

Earlonne: Javier spent about seven years in prison.

Nigel: But when he gets out, he can't move in with Reshell.

Earlone: That's because one of the conditions of his parole is that he has to spend 18 months in the county where he was living before he fled. And that's a couple of hours away from where Reshell lives.

Nigel: So once Javier is out, is there still work that you need to do on your marriage?

Reshell: Oh, definitely. Not so much that it's a strain or anger. That's all gone. But now how is he going to fit in our lives? On our lifestyle? Because the lifestyle we had before, we don't have anymore, and that's a lifestyle that I never want anymore. [soft beat come in and fades out]

Nigel: [00:40:00] E, when you and I left that interview, here's what I wanted to know: I wanted to know when those 18 months are over, is Reshell gonna let Javier come live with her again?

Earlone: Reshell is real sick and it's Javier's turn by her side.

Nigel: Well, we have an update. I spoke with Reshell a little while ago.

[to Reshell] Reshell, it's beautiful to hear your voice. I really appreciate you doing this.

Reshell: [over the phone] No problem.

Nigel: Ugh E, I gotta say, I was a little nervous to call her because I just didn't want to bother her.

Earlone: I can hear it in your voice.

Nigel: Yeah.

Earlone: She told us her cancer has taken a turn for the worst. She'd been in the hospital for the past week.

Reshell: I was rushed to UCSF and I've been here ever since. You know, I'm the one that's telling everybody it's gonna be okay. Deep down inside, I'm like, it's not gonna be okay and who am I going to be able to tell? I am drowning at the same time. [Nigel affirms] I need to be strong for everyone.

Nigel: Reshell told me that the morning she got really sick, Javier had called to see how she was doing, and she told them that their son was taking her to the hospital.

Earlone: Javier raced over, and he drove her the rest of the way to San Francisco. And the whole way there, he kept talking to her.

Reshell: "It's going to be okay. You're going to be fine. You're going to get through this. I'm here for you. Do you want me to lean the car seat back? Do

you want me to lean it forward? Do you want me to to rub your back?" He was just really there in my time of need.

Nigel: I got the sense that for the first time in a long time, Reshell was feeling taken care of.

Reshell: Finally, I let my guard down and I'm like, "I am not okay. I don't want to die." And he's like, "You're not dying. You're not going anywhere. And we have a lot to see and do with our grand babies. Just relax and breathe."

Nigel: When you guys were on the run and when you were in Mexico, he needed you for support for everything. And now it seems like the tables have turned a little bit. Does it feel that way at all?

Reshell: Um, yes. It's not so much about him anymore. Like I said, he had got lost in himself when he was trying to figure himself out. And it's not about him anymore, it's about what he can do to make us happy, what he can do to fill that void that when he was gone.

Nigel: So when the time comes and he can move in, are you ready to welcome him into your home again?

Reshell: Oh, definitely. Definitely. He also melts my heart all over again with seeing him with our grandkids. My grandkids are my everything. And seeing him interact with our grandkids, that really, really touched my heart.

Nigel: Reshell, we're thinking about you.

Earlonne: Definitely. [soft piano beat comes in]

Rasheed Lockheart: Ear Hustle is produced by Nigel Poor, Earlonne Woods, Rahsaan "New York" Thomas, John "Yahya" Johnson, and Bruce Wallace. This episode was scored with music by Antwan Williams, Rhashiyd Zinnamon, and David Jassy. It was sound designed and engineered by Antwan Williams. Amy Standen edits the show. Erin Wade is the Digital Producer and Julia Shapiro is Executive Producer for Radiotopia. Ear Hustle would like to thank acting warden Ron Broomfield. And as you know, every episode of Ear Hustle has to be approved by this guy here. [beat fades out]

Lieutenant Sam Robinson: This is Lieutenant Sam Robinson, the public information officer at San Quentin State Prison. This was actually one of my most enjoyable episodes. Javier worked in the Media Center as the staff photographer of the San Quentin News. And I remember interviewing that guy, and I don't want to call it bravado or I don't even know what the right word is to call my initial engagement with my initial interaction with him. But I remember hiring the guy and everything that you heard in this episode with his personality and his drive, and... it comes across that there's some people

who are destined to [00:45:00] kind of have success at whatever they do. And I think that's what you got from Javier. So with that, I will say that I approve this episode. [theme song comes in]

Earlone: This podcast was made possible with support from the Chan Zuckerberg initiative: working to redesign the justice system by building power and opportunity for communities impacted by incarceration.

Nigel: This podcast also received support from Woven Teaching. Woven teaching is a recently launched educational nonprofit providing lesson plans, discussion guides, and primary source materials for teaching about genocide and human rights. Woven Teaching practical help for teaching ethically and effectively. To learn more, please visit woventeaching.org

Earlone: Ear Hustle is a proud member of Radiotopia from PRX, a collection of the best podcasts around here at radiotopia.fm. I'm Earlone Woods.

Nigel: And I'm Nigel Poor. Thanks for listening.

Earlone: Indeed.

[00:46:11] **END OF EPISODE.**