



Episode 15: Thick Glass
First aired April 25, 2018

Male [00:00:01.01]: Larry did it in one take?

Male [00:00:02.18]: Man, Larry's a pro.

Male [00:00:03.18]: Larry did it in one take.

Male [00:00:04.29]: One seat in.

Listener alert [00:00:05.24]: The following podcast contains language and content that may not be appropriate for all listeners. Discretion is advised.
[dark, echoing beat]

Nigel [00:00:21.12]: When you were growing up, what was some advice your dad gave you?

Male [00:00:24.04]: Well, that's the problem. Um, but my, um, dad left when I was four.

Male [00:00:28.23]: Yeah, the only advice I got from my dad was to be still and take this ass whooping like a man.

Male [00:00:33.12]: He used to show me what fork to use, like the crab fork, and we had all these, uh, like instruments of silverware out on the table. It took me a while to get the hang of that.

Male [00:00:41.17]: Oh. Did my dad give me any advice? No, but he led by example of what not to do.

Nigel [00:00:46.23]: Uh, what fork do you use for salad?

Male [00:00:50.10]: It's the third one from the right.

Male [00:00:52.10]: My dad never gave me any advice.

Male [00:00:54.08]: Um, I think he did, but I don't recall.

Nigel [00:00:57.00]: Did your dad ever give you any advice?

Male [00:00:59.10]: Mm-mm (negative).

Male [00:01:00.16]: Um, my dad was gone by the time I was two and dead by the time I was twelve.

Male [00:01:05.06]: Told me to go to school, stay in college.

Nigel [00:01:08.05]: Did you listen to him?

Male [00:01:09.12]: I did not listen.

Nigel [00:01:11.29]: Did your dad ever give you any advice?

Male [00:01:13.19]: Yep. He said, "Smoke only on the weekends."

Earlonne [00:01:18.20]: [intro music] You are now tuned in to San Quentin's

'Ear Hustle' from PRX's Radiotopia. I'm Earlonne Woods. I'm incarcerated here at San Quentin State Prison in California.

Nigel [00:01:28.12]: I'm Nigel Poor, a visual artist who volunteers at the prison.

Earlonne [00:01:32.01]: And together, we're gonna take you inside. [intro music ramps up] Today on the podcast, we're gonna hear about bein' a dad from prison. [rolling, upbeat music]

Nigel [00:01:52.29]: E, did your dad give you any good advice?

Earlonne [00:01:55.09]: What do you mean, like when I was growing up?

Nigel [00:01:56.12]: Yeah.

Earlonne [00:01:57.18]: Not that I can recall, but when I went to prison, he did say, "Watch your back." [both laugh a little]

Nigel [00:02:04.00]: Was that helpful?

Earlonne [00:02:05.28]: I mean, it was cool coming from him. You know?

Nigel [00:02:08.01]: I guess it showed that he cared, right?

Earlonne [00:02:09.05]: Pretty much.

Nigel [00:02:10.15]: Ok. Well, being a parent is a lot more than giving advice. But, if you're in prison, it's hard to even do that because you're in prison.

Earlonne [00:02:17.21]: Yeah, but you can actually give advice and be a dad from prison. It's harder, but a lot of guys here have children, and

there's all sorts of different ways that they do it. And that's what we're gonna hear about today.

Nigel [00:02:28.14]: And, mainly, we're gonna focus on this guy here.

Derrick [00:02:31.05]: So, when I was told I was going to be a father, I started to think about what type of father did I plan on being.

Earlonne [00:02:40.08]: Derrick Holloway has been incarcerated for 21 years. When his son was born, Derrick was a 24-year-old drug dealer and had a lot on his mind.

Derrick [00:02:49.04]: I can't be a father like this, in my current condition and livin' the way that I was livin'. I really need to change.

Nigel [00:02:58.03]: But needing to change and actually changing your life, Derrick now knows, are two different things.

Derrick [00:03:04.06]: You know, I'm at the hospital with his mom, and seeing his face was like, "Wow." It was like a miracle. It was like, "Man, this human being is.... I'm responsible for a human being." And so, man, what came with that is a whole lot of emotions. A whole lot. A whole lot. That I wasn't even really prepared for or had even the emotional intelligence to even deal with it. And I just didn't know how to say, "This child is what's most important." I just didn't have the tools. [bright, melodic music]

Earlonne [00:03:36.15]: In spite of being a new dad, he didn't change.

Derrick [00:03:40.04]: I started getting suck in into the criminal lifestyle. Criminal thinking. Criminal behavior. After that, it was off to the dogs. [dry laugh]

Nigel [00:03:48.25]: So, um, give me a typical day, like, what was your, you

got up and then, how did the day unfold?

Derrick [00:03:54.13]: So, so I would get up and, of course, I would, you know, have girlfriends strolled all over the city. [laughs] So, it depended on what girlfriend's house I was at. So, you know, I would get up and kind of call around, see what everybody was doin', where everybody was gonna be at. Um, and I would, you know, hit the freeway, get to, get to this block where everybody was at. Kind of kick back, see what was goin' on. So, the typical day really was like me really making sure that the, that the spot where we was at had, had dope out there. You know, people were out there. They were ready. The spot was rollin'. Um, so, I would kick it there for a minute, but I would always be tryin' to run and see what, what would the next woman, what she was doin'. Yeah, I mean, I just love women. [laughs]

Earlonne [00:04:40.03]: Derrick was livin' the life. He was young. He had money, women. He thought he was on top of it all.

Derrick [00:04:47.01]: So, the downfall was, um, beginning really to use drugs. [dark musical interlude]

Earlonne [00:04:55.20]: And then, he really got in trouble. In 1997, less than a year after his son was born, Derrick was arrested for first-degree murder and sentenced to 37 years to life.

Nigel [00:05:05.04]: The next time Derrick saw his son, he was in prison, behind thick glass in a visiting room.

Derrick [00:05:10.15]: So, so, he came to visit on his, on his first birthday. And I'm just looking at him. And some of my thoughts was, uh, was this glass gonna represent our relationship? And, um, you know, for the first time, I was realizing and thinking like, "Man, there's a possibility that I may never, um, get an opportunity to, to see him as a child. Man, grow up and

have some kind of influence in his life."

[organ music] Come on! Somebody can do better than that! Let's give the Lord a handclap and praise.

Left to my own self, I, I couldn't find a way out. I wanted to do somethin' different, but I didn't know how. And, and coming to prison actually really gave me that opportunity to sit down and really examine my life and to begin to get the courage and to do something different with my life.

[organ music rises] Feelin' good. I feel God. I feel God in here! I feel deliverance in here! I feel a breakthrough in this place! Whenever you talk about the-

Nigel [00:06:10.23]: In prison, Derrick got religion. And he's now a prison preacher with a full-on congregation.

Derrick [00:06:16.13]: [organ music rises] So, if he put his self in prison, what prison are you talking about, Lord? He said, "I went all the way down to Hell, and I pulled the captives up, and I set them free! I did somethin' that you can't do! Yes! You can..."

Earlonne [00:06:30.18]: A lot of guys get religion, fake religion, act religious, but Derrick's not bullshitting. He's like the real deal.

Nigel [00:06:38.08]: How do you know?

Earlonne [00:06:39.23]: Because you can sit in one of his sermons and he'll just have a tear or two in your eyes, you know? And he walk the walk. He don't just walk the walk on the pulpit. He walk the walk on the yard. And he do around and counsels people, counsels youth, so yeah. He's real.

Nigel [00:06:55.12]: But he couldn't counsel his own son. When his son's

mother died, the boy's maternal grandmother took him in, and she thought it was best to keep him away from his father. And Derrick only heard what was going on second and third-hand.

Derrick [00:07:07.28]: So, when he was growing up, I heard good things early on. You know, him being in church. And I would send him Bibles. And him playing football. And, you know, him goin' to different schools, academies. And then, I started hearing different things about him being, you know, in the street life and going hard. And I was really disappointed. And even hearing that made me feel grief and pain and...

Earlonne [00:07:35.05]: So, he was, basically, growin' up like you were.

Derrick [00:07:39.07]: Yeah. He was growing up like I was. [thoughtful, rhythmic music]

Earlonne [00:07:49.26]: Derrick was soon going to get a second chance to parent his son, and we're going to hear about that in a minute. But first, here's another prison dad with a very different experience of parenting from prison.

John [00:08:03.22]: I could have been a, a dad at 17 and been just absolutely happy and dedicated, and I think I could of been a good pop. You know, as a kid. So, it was something I wanted and, uh, I was excited, confident, hopeful, and fulfilled.

Nigel [00:08:23.26]: John was 35 when his first child was born. When he committed the crime that led him to prison, his kids were three, eight, and nine-years-old.

John [00:08:32.24]: Uh, it happened so suddenly. It was the, the night of December 20th, and I was coming back from a Christmas party. And it was one of those drinking and driving fatality cases. So, I didn't have time to, to

think, "Well, what, what would happen if I were taken away from my kids?" That thought never, never occurred to me. [echoing noises of door closing] It was just utterly, chillingly sudden. From the very beginning, being separated from them was the, you know, the most gut-wrenching part of it, besides, of course, what had happened. The two young, innocent lives were taken because of what I had done. [sad music] I tried to be open with them about my responsibility. I tried to, to get them tuned into that, not to thinking of me as a victim. I think that, that made them a little more receptive to our parent/child relationship.

Nigel [00:09:38.02]: After John was arrested, he never went home again. He was a lawyer, middle-class, but he couldn't make the \$750,000 bail. The family life that he knew and loved was just gone.

Earlonne [00:09:50.16]: But, John was all about being a dad, and now he had to figure out how to do it from prison. Not easy.

John [00:09:58.06]: I remember they.... Of course, they came regularly in county jail, when I was there. Uh, but of course, you couldn't hug them there. It was through the glass.

Nigel [00:10:06.25]: After county jail, he got his sentence and was sent to a maximum security prison in Southern California. In that prison, his family could visit without glass between them.

John [00:10:16.00]: I'll never, as long as I live, forget the visiting room at Lancaster. And I spied them across the room and, and Remy, my daughter, just ran towards me. And, you know, just the feeling of, of hugging her, and then the boys joined me then, and I had my arms around all three of them. [light musical note] It might be the most emotional, uh, moment that, that I've ever experienced. There were so many hard parts about being away from the kids, but the biggest part was that I was so limited in how I could carry out what I still so fervently wanted to do, uh, as far as being a good

dad to them. For the longest time, when they were small, I would write one letter a day and alternate amongst three of them. Of course, each of them would be receiving a letter every three days. [guitar music] I remember with my daughter, Remy, she was the youngest. She was little. And, uh, I, I started a series of poems called the Silly Sally poems. And she got a real kick. She'd say, "Dad, Dad, when are you gonna, you know, I want some more Silly Sally." So, I kept writing and writing. Finally, she got to be about eight or nine years old, and she was a little bit too old for that. But, she, she talks about those still.

Nigel [00:11:48.12]: John's kids are all grown up now. They all went to college. The oldest is now 30. And, if you're wondering what happened to their mother, she and John are still married.

John [00:11:58.11] I mean, I'll be very frank. It was much more important and much more, much harder, you know, staying the meaningful father. Uh, I felt much more biting, acute loss of the children than I did my wife. Rightly or wrongly. [echoing noises and melody]

Derrick [00:12:22.06]: I didn't get a chance to really speak to him at 12 or 13, or get pictures, or send stuff to him and just kind of communicate with him. I didn't get any of those things.

Earlonne [00:12:31.28]: Back to Derrick, who hadn't heard directly from his son in years.

Derrick [00:12:36.04]: The time that I heard that my son was even, um, thinking about me was when he was in jail. So, I get on the phone with my sister, when she says, "Uh, I got somethin' to tell you. Derrick should be there, like tomorrow." [metallic music] "Derrick should be there tomorrow. He called right before he left to county jail and said that, 'I'm on my way. San Quentin.'"

Nigel [00:13:10.08]: Derrick's son, who he hadn't seen in about 20 years is coming to his prison. What are the chances?

Earlonne [00:13:16.22]: Well, you don't see it a lot, but I've met a few guys who are locked up with relatives, but father and son, that's an entirely different level of weirdness.

Derrick [00:13:32.21]: I told a couple of my friends. I was like, "Man, my son is here." And so, I went out that night to see if I could get just a glimpse of him. [overlapping voices]

Nigel [00:13:42.20]: So, when his son first came to San Quentin, he went to reception, which is basically orientation, and those guys there don't wear blue. They're in the orange jumpsuits.

Derrick [00:13:52.00]: But I'm looking at every guy in orange as they're walking by. I'm kind of measuring their height, because I hadn't seen him since he was like 11-months-old. And, so, I'm like measuring height like, "Ok." And looking at the wall, the build, I'm just looking at all these different things and these people, tryin' to identify my son.

Earlonne [00:14:09.02]: So, you had no clue what he look like?

Derrick [00:14:11.07]: Had no clue.

Nigel [00:14:12.02]: You never had any pictures?

Derrick [00:14:13.08]: I, I mean I had one picture, but he's 20-years-old now. You know, and you're tryin' to see like what does a, from a.... Well, I think his last picture I got when he was like six-years-old, like, so from six-years-old to 20, what has changed in all those years? [resounding, deep music]

Derrick Jr [00:14:34.02]: He kind of walk in. I notice him from the picture, even though it was old. I noticed him, and he just came up and just gave me a hug, and just started cryin', breakin' down.

Nigel [00:14:44.18]: That's Derrick Jr. He's serving five years for robbery.

Derrick Jr [00:14:49.08]: So, when I looked at him, and I just saw the love in his eyes, so kind of felt a connection right there. That's like, um, it's like, it's different. You talk to a lot of people, but you never actually feel that connection until you sittin' there with your Dad. You never met him at all, and then you finally just sittin' there eye-to-eye.

Earlonne [00:15:09.07]: They saw themselves in each other, father and son, but really, they were strangers. All they had between them was some DNA and this old memory.

Derrick Jr [00:15:19.23]: First memory of my Dad I have was probably going to the jail and seeing the glass and the mirror and seeing somebody behind it. That's all I remember. [distorted locking sounds]

Derrick [00:15:32.00]: So, he's talking, and I'm lookin' at him, and I'm, in between our conversations of, you know, what has he been doing, how is his girlfriend, how was my granddaughter, all of these different things. You know, how's his grandmother. Asking him all these questions. In between those things was this reality setting in that I'm in prison with my son, and I'm trying not to let that affect me as I speak with him. But, but the reality of it just kept hittin' me. I'm in a cell with my son. [metallic music]

Earlonne [00:16:08.14]: So, there they are. Father and son reunited in a fucked up place. I mean, prison is not set up for family life. That's for sure.

Nigel [00:16:17.28]: For Derrick Sr, he had to figure out how to be a dad to his son in a way that he had never been able to do on the outside.

Derrick [00:16:25.03]: How am I supposed to show up now? Like am I supposed to be like his partna'. You know, am I supposed to be like Dad? Am I supposed to be like my father? Like, what am I supposed to do? And it was so uncomfortable, but it was a good uncomfortableness, and it was like, it was like that kind of uncomfortableness like when I walk away like, I can't wait to be uncomfortable like that again. For me, right, the very first time that, um, I heard Derrick call me Dad.... It was, um.... It was as though God spoke to me, and I turned around so fast before he even really could get it all the way out. [stuttering beat]

Nigel [00:17:09.01]: How does it feel to say Dad?

Derrick Jr [00:17:11.28]: At first, it felt awkward, like.... I don't know. It felt awkward. 'Cause I ain't never said it. I ain't, I mean, I had no reason to, so... And when I say it, I catch myself and I'll be like, "Ah, shit." [rising metallic sounds, overlapping voices]

Derrick [00:17:32.18]: After about three days after he was here, I went up to his cell, and I said, "Derrick, come out." We was on the tier. I said, "Come out." And, he came out of his cell. And I said, "Um, give your Dad a kiss right here." And he kissed me on the cheek. I about ready to fly on the fifth tier. I was ready to just [makes whooshing noise]. Yeah. [guitar music] He, when he showed up here, that was like one of the things I had like on my calendar, like, when it's his birthday. So, I made sure everything was all in place. Let me make sure I get this package right. Let me make sure I get all this stuff right, so when it's his birthday, I'm gonna go and make his something, because he had never really tasted my cooking.

Derrick Jr [00:18:21.24]: So, he came up there, told me happy birthday, hugged me, kissed me, and then told me he was gettin' ready to cook. And I had never ate his cookin'.

Nigel [00:18:28.25]: So, what'd he make for you on your birthday? [Derrick Sr laughs]

Derrick Jr [00:18:30.29]: Uh, it was a rice bowl, but it had seafood. It had all different type of stuff and different type of vegetables and everything. It was.... I don't even eat vegetables. [Derrick Sr laughs] But I ate 'em.

Earlonne [00:18:45.12]: So, I'm strolling. I'm comin' down the back of the buildin'. [makes whooshing noise] So, in the back of the building, I gotta turn and go up the stairs, so I'm turn rollin'. I see big Derrick and little Derrick in the shower. [Derrick Sr laughs] They side by side, right. I'm like, "That's you like 20 years ago." [all laugh]

Derrick [00:19:07.22]: Muscles gone. [all laugh] I know. I was looking at him too. That's crazy.

Nigel [00:19:15.10]: Yeah. 'Cause that wouldn't happen in too many places.

Earlonne [00:19:17.18]: Nah, that wouldn't happen in too many places. You're just sittin' there showering with your son. Y'all just, you know, cuttin' it, and they just-

Derrick Jr [00:19:23.14]: And even that was awkward! Man, you know that?

Derrick [00:19:25.23]: But I had to force myself through it, like, man, like this is the reality, man, like, I'm naked, like, where do they do this at? [overlapping voices and showers running] I watch him walk up the stairs sometimes, right. I'm walkin' behind. He's always goin' faster than me, and I watch him go up, and I remember how I used to walk. And so, when I watch him walk up the stairs, sometimes I'm just starin' at him like, "Man, look at me. That is me." And sometimes, it is so overwhelming because nobody wants prison for their child. And so it makes me more protective. You know, now, more like, "Where you at?" And, I'll see him, but I don't let

him see me see him, because that brings up a whole 'nother thing, but yeah, just watchin' him, watchin' his mannerisms, how he interacts with people on the tier, how he interacts with people in the prison. Very outgoing, and I tell him this all the time, I say, "You just a functioning extrovert, because really you're an introvert like me." [both laugh] You really want to be by yourself. You really do good by yourself, but because we're outgoing people, you know, people talk to us and like us. And so, I see that in him. But he has no problem being by his self. [both laugh]

Derrick Jr [00:20:55.10]: We basically do everything just alike. When I get mad, I want to be by, I go outside at night and just be walkin'. One night, I was just walkin' like, "What the hell is you doin' out here?" Like, man, I didn't feel like bein' bothered. And then, we both ended up just bein' out there walkin'. [Derrick Sr laughs] Then, we always just run into each other out there, like, man. [buzzing, overlapping voices]

Derrick [00:21:22.06]: I am nervous every time the alarm goes off. I am like, "Where is he? Is he involved? Was there a fight?" Um, [laughs] you know, so for me, it is an anxious day. [laughs] Now I know what my parents went through. Wow. Serious. You reap what you sow. I'm tellin' you. [guitar strumming, metallic noises]

Nigel [00:21:54.21]: So, we last heard from you in season one, when we were talkin' about the boom boom room.

Maverick [00:22:00.18] Oh, yes. The mission impossible conception of my son.

Earlonne [00:22:07.19]: That's Maverick. In season one, he told us how him and his wife decided to start a family while he was in prison. Here's a clip from that episode.

Maverick [00:22:16.01]: I had been at this prison for two years, and we had

mastered the art of being intimate on the patio. It got us to talking, and she was like, "I wish I could have a kid right now." And that got me to thinking. I'm like, "Oh, man. This is the only thing that you can give her. You, uh, you should go ahead and give her this." I would only get a visit like maybe once-

Nigel [00:22:47.00]: How old is he now?

Maverick [00:22:48.05]: He is 15-years-old.

Nigel [00:22:50.06]: So, he's a teenager.

Maverick [00:22:52.10]: Man. Tell me about it. [organ note into rhythmic music with drums]

Earlonne [00:22:56.03]: Maverick's been in prison for his son's entire life.

Nigel [00:22:58.24]: But they have visits and phone calls.

Earlonne [00:23:00.18]: And letters.

Nigel [00:23:01.09]: Yep.

Earlonne [00:23:01.23]: That's what you got to work with if you want to be an active parent from prison.

Nigel [00:23:04.27]: And starting about a year ago, Maverick began having family visits, and that's one of the biggest privileges here.

Earlonne [00:23:11.19]: It's huge! That's when your wife and your kids-

Nigel [00:23:14.16]: Or, it can be your parents and siblings, come to stay with you for a few days in a cottage here.

Earlonne [00:23:19.25]: And we asked Maverick to tell us about the latest family visit he had with his wife and his son.

Maverick [00:23:26.22]: I cut his hair for the first time. And that's like a rite of passage for every father, to cut his son's hair at some point in time. And he was scared at first, because the whole month before the visit I told him, "You better not get your haircut. Don't get your hair cut. I'm gonna cut your hair." And he was like, "Oh, all right. Uh...." You know, he was skeptical. And I brought my, my clippers out, and when it came time to do it, I'm like, "Take off your shirt." And he's embarrassed because, you know, he's a little big fella for his age, and uh, he's like, "Uh...." And it was so funny. I'm like, "Boy, if you don't stop. I am your Daddy. I gave you that. You know. Ain't no judgment. I ain't ever gonna judge you. You are about to go to one of the most horriblest, cruelest place on the planet. High school. And some people gonna be makin' fun of your body. If you are embarrassed of your body, then kids are gonna use that against you, so you gotta be comfortable in the skin you in. So, just get comfortable." [clippers buzzing and upbeat music] After I cut his hair, he went to look at it, and he was like, "Oh my! Oh my goodness! Papa, this is.... This is great! I gotta pay \$40 to get this haircut." And I was like, "Yeah, boy. You gonna be able to get that every day when I come home." And it, it just gave me a glimpse of how thirsty he is to have a father in his life. But I believe that unsurity of exactly when I was gonna come home, it was occupying too much of his mind. I got him worryin' about me in here so much to where he can't focus in class, and that's what hurts me the most, me not bein' able to help him process this, me not bein' able to be there to just be there to help him, to hold him, to let him know, "Look. It's gonna be all right." [bright music]

Earlonne [00:25:50.25]: It's been a long struggle, but the good news is, his son might have his Dad home soon. Maverick has a date, which means he could be released on parole sometime this year.

Nigel [00:26:05.14]: Thanks for coming back. [door closes] I know this isn't an easy one. So, what we wanted to talk about, um, was what happened with your son.

Derrick [00:26:16.23]: Yeah. Yeah, so, uh, um, I actually got a call at work and said that, um, they were ready to transfer Derrick, and um, they were like trans-packing him right now, so I needed to get there right away. I went back to the building. So, his door is open and I see a lot of boxes out in the front and some of his tubs and, you know, it really began to sink in that he was gettin' ready to leave, and I had all these emotions goin' on like, "Could I have said somethin' else?" You know, "What else could I have done? Should I have moved him in?" You know, "Should I have been there a little bit more?" Kind of like, fendin' off some of these bad people. Had all these emotions goin', all these thoughts, all these feelings.

Nigel [00:27:17.09]: The reason Derrick Jr was transferred out of San Quentin was because he got in trouble for contraband.

Earlonne [00:27:22.06]: And it was happenin' fast, so Derrick Sr went to go see him one last time.

Nigel [00:27:27.27]: Did he say anything to you?

Derrick [00:27:29.10]: Yeah. He just kind of looked and, and I read his, his thoughts kind of. I looked in his eyes and it was like, you know, "Dad, I don't really wanna leave." Um, "But I know I have to at this point." And, uh, that hit on me hard right now. I said yeah, no. "Well, I'm gonna help you carry your stuff down." And then, when he comes out to actually leave, he has on his blue uniform, as I like to call it, and he had his hair up in a, because you know, he has his long hair, so he's got it up with these dreads. He's got it up in a ponytail, and I'm lookin' at him. We're standin' at the end of the, at the top of the stairs, and he hugs me, and he's like, "Dad, I love you." And, man, he shoots down the stairs so fast. I'm tryin' to keep up with

him and I realize [laughs].... So, he goes out the door and I'm followin' him. I'm like, "I'm gonna walk down there with you." And he's walkin' down and I remember studying everything about him. I actually walked behind him just to look at him and I'm studying his body motion, his footsteps, and everything. Yeah.

Nigel [00:28:43.11]: Where did he go?

Derrick [00:28:45.06]: To, um, Vacaville.

Nigel [00:28:47.26]: Which is a level three?

Derrick [00:28:49.02]: Which is a level three.

Nigel [00:28:51.02]: What's your biggest fear for him now?

Derrick [00:28:53.16]: Um, that he won't make it out. [piano music]

Nigel [00:28:59.17]: So, as we said, Derrick Jr came in with a five-year sentence. But Derrick Sr's fear is that it could turn into a much longer sentence. I know you said you've seen this happen to guys.

Earlonne [00:29:09.11]: Yeah. I've seen a guy that came in with a car theft and committed murder in prison. Now he's been here 46 years.

Nigel [00:29:15.29]: Right. He's still at San Quentin.

Earlonne [00:29:16.26]: Still here.

Nigel [00:29:17.23]: So that's one big concern for Derrick Sr. The other is, he's lost daily contact with his son.

Earlonne [00:29:23.20]: He told us he's waiting to get permission to

exchange letters with him, but yeah, it's a blow.

Nigel [00:29:28.10]: The closeness that he achieved for the first time with his son isn't going to be easy to maintain.

Earlonne [00:29:33.24]: It's not just that Derrick Sr's in prison, which is hard enough. His son's now in a different prison in a different part of the state. It's now like they have two thick layers of glass between them. [rhythmic beat starts]

Nigel [00:29:57.13]: When we come back, we're gonna have count time. That's when we play a little something extra, a song, an anecdote. Basically, something we really want you to hear.

Earlonne [00:30:06.28]: This time, we're gonna hear from John again. He's gonna answer a question from a listener.

Curtis [00:30:21.29]: [light, tinkling music with bass beat] Hi, this is Curtis Roberts. You may remember me from season one.

Nigel [00:30:25.19]: Ok. Wait, in your mind, what's the difference between a journal and a diary?

Curtis [00:30:29.01]: Truthfully, a journal is like, it's very manly. A diary is very feminine and it's very personal. 'Ear Hustle' gets lots of questions about how to get letters to men and women on the inside. If that's something you want to do, go to the FAQ section on the 'Ear Hustle' website. That's earhustlesq.com/faq to find out how. If you missed my story from season one, go back and check it out. It's titled, 'Left Behind'. Or, don't just go back and listen to my story, start with the beginning, episode one, 'Cellies'. And remember, everyone loves getting letters, especially people in prison.

[00:31:17.15]: [bells ringing] Count time! Woods! Five, four. Morris.
[rhythmic beat] [overlapping male voices] Eight, seven.

Nigel [00:31:28.21]: Earlonne, you know we get a lot of letters, right?

Earlonne [00:31:30.22]: Right.

Nigel [00:31:31.17]: So many so that when we are deep into production, it's really hard for me to keep up with 'em. So, I put 'em in a box so I can get to them shortly. But, while we were working on this episode, I happened to pull one randomly out of that box, and I couldn't believe it.

Earlonne [00:31:45.12]: Yeah. We get letters from all over asking all kinds of stuff. But, when we got this one, we thought we'd ask John to handle it.

John [00:31:53.15]: Ok. This is a letter, it looks like from a, a youngster named Jaylon. It says, "My name is Jaylon. My dad is in prison. I'm nine, nine and a half years old. I really like listening to your podcast." [paper crumples] Oh. "My Dad does not write me a lot now. Can I get him to write me more?" Oh. [sniffling] "Please. Please write back. Thanks, Jaylon. P.S. Can you share this on one of your podcasts please?"

Earlonne [00:32:41.22]: So, so reading that, like what do you get? Like what is your advice to him?

John [00:32:45.14]: Oh, man. I've got tears in my eyes and something in my throat right now. [sniffles] Jaylon, if you're listenin' now, my heart goes out to you, little one. [sniffles] I don't know what is in your Dad's heart. Um, wherever he is in this system, there are a lot of pressures on him. Please don't stop. Please. Your letter says that he does not write to you a lot. So, that's telling me that he does write you some. So, the caring is there. Dig deep into that little heart and soul of yours and, and try to find the best words you can to let your Dad know how important staying in contact with

him is to you, how much you love the letters that you do get, how much you get out of them, and I bet you your letters and gonna make him understand how important whatever he has to say is in your life. [sniffles] What a great letter, Jaylon. Keep it up. Please, please. [guitar music]

Nigel [00:34:07.17]: Jaylon, we really appreciate you sending that letter.

Earlonne [00:34:10.09]: And I hope you heard your name in that Christmas song, Jaylon. [bells ring, overlapping male voices, guitar music rises]

Nigel [00:34:27.09]: Thanks to all the fathers we spoke to for this episode: Derrick, John, and Maverick. And thanks to Derrick Jr too for being a part of this story.

Earlonne [00:34:34.19]: 'Ear Hustle' is produced by myself, Earlonne Woods, and Nigel Poor, with help from outside producer Pat Mesiti-Miller, who also works with the sound design team. This episode was scored with music and sound design by David Jassy and Antwan Williams, with contributions from Lee Jasper, Maserati-E, and Charlie Spencer.

Nigel [00:34:53.00]: Curtis Fox is our story editor and Julie Shapiro is our executive producer for Radiotopia. We also want to thank Warden Ron Davis and, as you know, every episode has to be approved by this guy here.

Sam Robinson [00:35:05.00]: I am Lieutenant Sam Robinson, the public information officer at San Quentin State Prison, and I approve this story.

Nigel [00:35:10.11]: Next time on 'Ear Hustle'...

Earlonne [00:35:11.22]: We're gonna be answering some of your questions.

Nigel [00:35:13.29]: 'Cause you know. I tell you. Every time I go to the post

office, that P.O. box is full of postcards.

Earlonne [00:35:19.07]: Right.

Nigel [00:35:20.12]: And there's no way we can answer all of them, but we've got a great selection that we're gonna choose from, like, uh, this postcard right here. [opening letter]

Earlonne [00:35:30.07]: Ah, this is a good one from Brooklyn, New York. It says...you're gonna have to wait 'til next time to hear. [both laugh] [outro music]

Nigel [00:35:38.29]: Teaser!

Earlonne [00:35:44.18]: Check out our website, earhustlesq.com, where you can download transcripts of all of our stories, as well as see photos of people from our stories.

Nigel [00:35:52.03]: And, check out our listener photographs and some of the cool kites we've received. And, also, remember, you can see us on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook at EarHustleSQ.

Earlonne [00:36:01.24]: And thanks for leaving all those great reviews on iTunes. Nig comes in and shares them all with us, and it's really cool to know what you're thinking.

Nigel [00:36:09.23]: Keep 'em coming.

Earlonne [00:36:10.14]: Please do. I'm Earlonne Woods.

Nigel [00:36:12.26]: And I'm Nigel Poor. Thanks for listening.

Derrick Jr [00:36:18.01]: People like, "Man, he can hoop." I'm like, "Man,

that fat boy can't hoop." Then, one morning, they was like, "Man, your dad out there servin' right now." I was about to play against him 'til everybody start comin', and I'm like, "All right. We gonna play on the same team." It shocked me. I be like, "Oh." He really could get down. You would never think he could hoop though.

Earlonne [00:36:39.11]: [melodic notes] Hey listeners, guess what? To help kick off season two, we have brand new 'Ear Hustle' t-shirts.

Nigel [00:36:45.08]: And they are awesome.

Earlonne [00:36:47.19]: Too bad I can't wear one inside.

Nigel [00:36:49.28]: I know. I'm really sorry about that, but if you on the outside want to, just go to our website, earhustlesq.com, and order one.

Earlonne [00:36:58.18]: Nig, wouldn't it be cool if you were walking down the street and you saw someone wearing one?

Nigel [00:37:01.27]: Oh, man. I would flip if I saw that, and you know what I would do?

Earlonne [00:37:04.27]: Hopefully, you'd take out your phone and take a picture.

Nigel [00:37:06.29]: I would do that, and I'd probably be so excited, I'd turn the phone around and ask if I could do a selfie with them. And then, I would post that sucker on Instagram.

Earlonne [00:37:14.20]: Who would you like to see wearing one of our t-shirts?

Nigel [00:37:16.10]: People say I sound like her, and someone recently

even said I look like her.

Earlonne [00:37:20.10]: You talking about that podcast famous host of 'Serial', Sarah Koenig?

Nigel [00:37:24.24]: Mmhmm.

Earlonne [00:37:25.05]: Is that who you talking about?

Nigel [00:37:25.25]: That's who I'm talking about. How about you?

Earlonne [00:37:27.23]: I would like to see the Queen of England-

Nigel [00:37:30.06]: What? [laughing]

Earlonne [00:37:31.00]: Sittin' all proper, drinkin' tea with a 'Ear Hustle' t-shirt on at the upcoming royal wedding.

Nigel [00:37:36.20]: That would be crazy.

Earlonne [00:37:37.20]: Or Rihanna. Or Beyonce. Or Dale. Or-

Nigel [00:37:40.06]: Ok. Ok. [laughs] That's enough. Well, if anyone out there wants to be wearing an 'Ear Hustle' t-shirt, go to our website, earhustlesq.com, and get one.

Earlonne [00:37:49.16]: And thanks for helping us spread the 'Ear Hustle' love on the outside.

Radiotopia outro [00:37:58.15]: Radiotopia from PRX.

Female [00:38:06.19]: Thanks for listening and thanks to Adzerk for providing their ad serving platform to Radiotopia.

