



## Episode 14: The Workaround

[00:00:02.03]: [sounds of men playing basketball]

Ted Koppel [00:00:07.25]: I'm Ted Koppel, and this episode of 'Ear Hustle' contains very explicit language. Please be advised, this may not be for every listener.  
[dripping, echoing beat starts]

Earlonne [00:00:23.11]: How do you make a fi-fi?

Male [00:00:25.21]: What the hell is that? [plucking, curious music]

Earlonne [00:00:27.08]: What is a fi-fi?

Male [00:00:29.06]: I have no clue. [laughs]

Earlonne [00:00:32.02]: Have you ever heard of a fi-fi?

Male [00:00:34.04]: Yeah, I heard of fi-fi. Yep. My cellie used to have one, long time ago.

Earlonne [00:00:38.26]: Yeah?

Male [00:00:39.02]: That fool had a couple of them actually. [laughs] [quick, futuristic beat] [intro music]

Earlonne [00:00:47.01]: You're 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 [00:00:57.11]: I'm Nigel Poor, a visual artist who volunteers at the prison.

Earlone [00:01:00.22]: And, together, we're going to take you inside. [intro music continues] [water running, people talking in background] Today on the podcast, we're talking about looking good and feeling good in prison. [rhythmic, upbeat music]

Nigel [00:01:32.00]: Earlone, when I first came to prison, honestly, I expected everybody to be really scruffy.

Earlone [00:01:38.06]: Scruffy?

Nigel [00:01:39.09]: Sorry.

Earlone [00:01:39.15]: Like a little dog or somethin'?

Nigel [00:01:41.05]: [laughs] Yeah, I'm sorry. But, the thing is, I was wrong.

Earlone [00:01:43.23]: Hell yeah, you were wrong.

Nigel [00:01:44.18]: I know. I know. And I was really shocked because guys take great care of themselves.

Earlone [00:01:49.10]: Of course we do.

Nigel [00:01:50.13]: You're really well put together.

Earlone [00:01:51.19]: Of course we are.

Nigel [00:01:52.14]: And a lot of guys, not every guy, but a lot of guys are in really good shape.

Earlone [00:01:55.15]: Gettin' there.

Nigel [00:01:56.18]: And... [laughs] Don't give up, E. And they obviously think about their hair, their skin, their clothes.

Earlone [00:02:02.23]: We do. And, in prison, it takes extra effort. You can't just go

to the local mall. You can't go to the barbershop. You can't go to the shoe shine spot. There's a lot you can't do.

Nigel [00:02:12.29]: Yeah. And it's not trivial stuff. Inside or outside, looking good is important to feeling good about yourself.

Earlone [00:02:18.27]: That's right. There's a lot that can get you down in here, like long days, bad food, no women. One way to show yourself and everyone else that prison doesn't own you is to look your best. It's self-respect, self-preservation, so that's what we're going to hear about on this episode. How do guys do it? How do you keep your clothes looking sharp?

Nigel [00:02:40.23]: How do you keep your skin clear?

Earlone [00:02:42.03]: How do you get a good haircut?

Nigel [00:02:43.26]: And, also, we're going to hear about what some guys do to escape this place in their minds.

Earlone [00:02:50.04]: And, how to make a fi-fi.

Nigel [00:02:51.28]: You know people are going to wonder what a fi-fi is, even some guys in here are gonna wonder.

Earlone [00:02:56.14]: Let 'em wonder. We'll get to old fi-fi later in the podcast. [echoing beat, muted voices, the sound of brushing teeth]

Nigel [00:03:08.26]: Ok. So, let me ask you something more mundane.

Earlone [00:03:10.28]: What's up?

Nigel [00:03:11.21]: I've heard there's a specific way in prison you have to brush your teeth. You don't spit into the sink.

Earlone [00:03:17.21]: Yeah. In prison, you're living in these cramped quarters, so you want to keep the germs at a minimum, so you spit the foam in the toilet.

Nigel [00:03:26.03]: What happens if you spit in the sink?

Earlone [00:03:27.11]: That's very disrespectful and very uncleanly.

Nigel [00:03:31.08]: [laughs] So you're saying, you're saying at home my sink is really dirty?

Earlone [00:03:34.17]: Nah, I mean, it's just you and your partner probably.

Nigel [00:03:37.02]: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Earlone [00:03:38.02]: You know, in here, it's you and a stranger.

Nigel [00:03:40.01]: What else is different about brushing your teeth?

Earlone [00:03:41.11]: Well, if you can afford it, you can buy some toothpaste and a nice toothbrush. But if you can't afford it, you get a flimsy toothbrush from the state and some tooth powder.

Nigel [00:03:51.25]: Ugh! Tooth powder? [both laugh] You mean like baking soda? [thumping beat]

Earlone [00:03:55.26]: Not even baking soda. It's like crushed up chalk.

Nigel [00:03:58.15]: Ugh, what's it do for the breath?

Earlone [00:03:59.23]: Nothin'. Nothin' at all. Hey, but it'll buff your teeth. It's the polish.

Nigel [00:04:04.17]: It's the polish. [laughs]

Earlone [00:04:06.16]: It's prison polish.

Nigel [00:04:08.24]: Um, ok, so, keeping your teeth clean is different in prison and so is getting the wrinkles out of your clothes, which is something you're gonna want to do on visiting day, right?

Earlone [00:04:17.17]: Yeah. Visiting days are pretty much on the weekends, and there are few irons in the house here. Two irons for like 800 people. You know what I'm saying? So, you might not get your chance. But, as always, there's a workaround. And Jason Jones laid it out for you.

Nigel [00:04:35.11]: That he did.

Earlone [00:04:35.24]: Or did he iron it out for you?

Nigel [00:04:38.00]: [laughs] He did. [strobing sounds, lock clicking]

Jason [00:04:44.14]: So, if you don't have an iron, right, you use a, a, any kind of comb, right. And what you do is put your pants, lay your pants onto the bed, and you get the back of the comb and you press hard and just straighten it all the way out, and it creates the crease, right. It creates the crease. You can do it with your shirt and everything. And then you unroll your mat at night and put it up under your mat at night and just, while you sleep, you sleep on top of it. So, in the morning when you wake up, that's freshly creased.

Nigel [00:05:12.20]: Do you have to like dampen them or anything?

Jason [00:05:14.20]: Nah, you don't have to dampen them. You can, but you don't have to.

Nigel [00:05:17.11]: Wow.

Jason [00:05:18.03]: Yes.

Nigel [00:05:18.09]: All you need is a comb and a mattress.

Jason [00:05:20.06]: What works even better is if you get some floor wax and you put it on the crease as you iron it out with the comb, as you're pressing it out with the comb. Then, it locks in the crease. It even gives it like a shine. [shuffling upbeat music]

Nigel [00:05:39.07]: All right, Earlone. So, your pants and your shirt are looking nice and crispy. But if it's visiting day and your hair is a mess, what are your options?

Earlone [00:05:47.28]: Well, there's a lot of guys in here who cut hair, but, if you really want to look sharp, you do what I did and shoot the shit with Big Zo out on the yard. [hair clippers buzzing]

Big Zo [00:06:00.23]: Big Zo's Barbershop. [males repeating Big Zo] Right now, we're

out on the patio. Come out here. While you're waiting, you can play some basketball. You can play tennis. I even got horseshoes for you.

Male [00:06:15.00]: And you can get shitted on by seagulls.

Male [00:06:16.01]: By seagulls. [all laugh]

Big Zo [00:06:19.27]: And, uh, all are welcome. Don't matter what type of hair you have, what race you are. I do it all. I cut white, black, Hispanic, Asian, curly, wiry, thin, nappy, wavy. I cut 'em all. Yeah, I'm about to give him a high-top fade.

Male [00:06:37.25]: No. [laughs]

Big Zo [00:06:38.16]: He gonna look like a marine when I get through with him.

Male [00:06:40.10]: No. Nah. I don't want no high-top fade. You... Every time people look at my hair when he gets done-

Big Zo [00:06:45.27]: They salute.

Male [00:06:46.14]: They saw how, how of a good job my barber is.

Big Zo [00:06:52.24]: Shootin' the crap for a minute, cuttin' their hair, and gettin' 'em out to work lookin' fresh. It makes a person feel good, you know? You feel good makin' them look good, and they walk out lookin' good, so they feel good. If you don't feel good, then I don't look good.

Earlone [00:07:11.14]: Have you ever fucked somebody up?

Big Zo [00:07:13.24]: [laughs] I fucked you up before.

Earlone [00:07:15.10]: Yeah, you did. That's why I said that.

Big Zo [00:07:17.09]: Yeah, yeah. And boy was he hot. I keep telling him. You can't sit there and talk and dictate what I do while I got the clippers in your beard. What's wrong with you?

Earlone [00:07:27.09]: I was just... No, no, no, no, no. Tell the truth.

Big Zo [00:07:30.14]: Hey, I ain't gonna lie. I ain't gonna lie.

Earlone [00:07:29.22]: I... He used to cut my hair, right. And I used to walk around and he used to get customers and it wasn't his haircut. It was my-

Big Zo [00:07:34.16]: I'm, I'm pissed off right now 'cause that dude had a badass beard and afro. You, you was-

Male [00:07:42.13]: I thought I was the billboard.

Big Zo [00:07:44.00]: Shut up. [laughs] [tapping, clapping beat]

Nigel [00:07:57.01]: [laughs] Earlone, you still have that beard, but what happened to the afro? [both laugh]

Earlone [00:08:02.04]: Well, I gained weight and the afro, for me, it made me look bigger.

Nigel [00:08:07.21]: Are you sure? It seems like it would balance you out.

Earlone [00:08:09.15]: Nah. Hell nah. If I cut the beard, I'd really look skinny.

Nigel [00:08:12.15]: All right. So, that's the clothes and the hair. Now let's talk about skin.

Earlone [00:08:16.11]: Right.

Nigel [00:08:16.18]: Guys in here have no wrinkles. I mean, I am serious. You can talk to a guy who's 60 and honestly, he looks like 40. How? [laughs]

Earlone [00:08:25.26]: Well, there's a saying that prison preserves you. Maybe it's you don't see that much sun. I don't know. But, prison do have a guy named Bucci who feels he makes a soap that preserves your youth. Nicola Bucci has been in San Quentin for four years.

Nigel [00:08:43.06]: Yep. I heard about him and got him to come down into the media lab to explain how he started making his soap back when he was in L.A. County, before he got to San Quentin.

Bucci [00:08:54.21]: I grew up working in the kitchen. I'm a chef, so I like making things, right. One day, I was looking... I had saved up about maybe five to ten bars of state soap. It was just white soap that they issue you and-

Earlone [00:09:12.00]: The soap he's talking about, the state issued soap, they're little, itty bitty bars.

Nigel [00:09:16.28]: Like motel soap?

Earlone [00:09:17.29]: Pretty much.

Nigel [00:09:19.07]: Mmm. But guys can also buy hygiene stuff at the canteen.

Earlone [00:09:22.24]: Yeah. You can buy better soap, you know, uh, acne medicine, deodorant, lotion. You can buy all the kind of stuff.

Bucci [00:09:30.19]: So, one day my creative mind said, "Well, you know what? I can take this Dial soap, grind it up and mix it in with the state soap and then I'll have five Dial soaps versus one Dial soap and I'll maximize my costs.

Nigel [00:09:45.17]: But wait, how did you make... I don't get how you made them.

Bucci [00:09:47.16]: Well, see, you grind up the state soap. There was a little stool that you had in the cell and it had kind of a sharp edge, so I would grind the soap on the edge of the stool, shave the soap down into a big pile of soap shavings, and I was like, "Well, how am I gonna mix it? I can just use water." And I said, "Well, I could use lotion. That can be my binding agent." I knew-

Nigel [00:10:10.01]: Remember that on the outside he was a chef who also did a lot of baking.

Bucci [00:10:14.12]: It's a kneading technique where you're folding, so what I did was I used that same technique to make soap. So, I formed them into bars, which were probably two inches by three inches. And, it was uncharted territory. Didn't even know what to call it. And, I was looking at it, and I showed my cellie my product after I had made all these bars. And he says, "Man, that looks like a Bucci Bar."

Nigel [00:10:44.16]: So far, so good, right? [Earlone laughs] Then, Bucci started getting creative.



Bucci [00:10:50.01]: I'm pretty familiar with good hygiene. So, to make it an effective acne bar, you need something to exfoliate the skin. We used to get oranges, and I would take the orange zest and I would cut it up and I would let it dry out in the windowsill for two or three weeks. And then, it would be pretty stiff. And then, I would make these orange acne bars. [low, bumping music] So, at the top of the production line of the Bucci Bars in the county jail, we had orange acne zest bars, orange cranberry bar. There'd be dried apples. There'd be dried mangos. We were able to get oats. So, I made an oatmeal raisin Bucci Bar. It was soap. You can clean your body with it.

Nigel [00:11:37.01]: Wait? What were the raisins for?

Bucci [00:11:39.05]: Well, you know, to give you, just to make some contrast, right. So-

Nigel [00:11:43.04]: What was the reaction from guys?

Bucci [00:11:45.05]: There was a guy who was a young guy, and I gave him a Bucci Bar. And he looked at it, and he's like, "Oh, thank you." And so, the next day, we were out in dayroom and he says, "I actually tried eating it." I said, "You big dummy, it says soap right on the..." He says, "I didn't even read it." He said, "It looked so good and tasty." And I was like, wow. Literally, he washed his mouth out with soap. [laughs] [beatboxing music]

Earlone [00:12:18.13]: Bucci spent two and a half years in the L.A. County Jail, and he say he produced thousands of Bucci Bars.

Nigel [00:12:23.29]: Man, that is a lot of work.

Earlone [00:12:25.17]: Eh, it takes a lot to keep your appearances up.

Nigel [00:12:27.29]: Yep. And that's what we're talking about today, what guys do in here to look good and feel good. And I wanted to talk to someone else at San Quentin about this who doesn't identify as male.

Earlone [00:12:37.25]: Ah. You're talking about Lady Jae.

Nigel [00:12:39.18]: Mmhmm. Jarvis Jovan Clark, aka Lady Jae. And she already

identified as a woman when she came to San Quentin around 2013.

Earlone [00:12:49.22]: And back then, the catalogs prisoners ordered from didn't use to carry the kind of things she wanted.

Nigel [00:12:55.12]: So, I notice now, in the catalog, there's now a trans, actually a transgender section.

Lady Jae [00:13:00.24]: [laughs] Yes! Yes!

Nigel [00:13:02.05]: But, before there was, I'm curious about how did you do some of the things [Jae laughs] you needed to do to be a woman. Like, for example, before you could buy makeup, how did you do those things in prison?

Lady Jae [00:13:13.06]: Ok, so, prior to us being able to purchase real cosmetics - fabulous - out of the catalog, we had to become prison chemists and had to make our own makeup. So, you take a plastic razor, right, you burn the razor, and you let the vapors go, up and hold up a piece of paper, and let all that black vapor get on the paper.

Earlone [00:13:36.28]: Soot.

Lady Jae [00:13:36.28]: Right. Soot, soot. So, then, after the soot get on it, you take white toothpaste, because white toothpaste is the only one that work. The blue and the ones with the little breath mints don't work. You would hurt yourself. So, you take plain white toothpaste. You mix it up with a dab of little grease, right. You mix it up until you get like a paste consistency and then you just apply it to your eyes. The way you apply it, you take an old toothbrush or a new one if you really, if you ballin' like that, and you just brush your eyelids. And the more you apply, the longer your eyelashes get. And then, for the shadow, the lipstick, and the rouge, you can do many ways. You can take a magazine that has a high content of pigment on the paper and you can just shave the colors off the paper, right, and you mix that with a little bit of water, not, just a drop. And you mix that. That become your shadow, your lips, and your rouge. Or, you can go get chalk. They give you any color you want: lime, yellow, pink, purple, red. See, I look fabulous in red because they say I got Betty Boop lips. [upbeat music]

Nigel [00:14:58.06]: We're gonna hear more from Lady Jae later in the season, and she's got an interesting take on this very macho, very male institution.

Earlone [00:15:05.10]: Betty Boo lips?

Nigel [00:15:06.29]: Betty Boop.

From just the word, what do you think it might be?

Male [00:15:16.10]: fi-fi. Wow. Huh.

Male [00:15:21.22]: Who's fi-fi? I would take it, fi-fi's short for Felicia, Fatima.

Male [00:15:28.27]: I honestly don't know. I have no clue. I can't even guess.

Earlone [00:15:34.24]: Ok. Glove in a sock. You ever heard of that?

Male [00:15:40.04]: Glock in a sock?

Earlone [00:15:41.11]: Nah. See? He went violent.

Male [00:15:43.00]: Nah. I'm just sayin' that's the closest thing I'm hearing.

Earlone [00:15:45.18]: You in the cell by yourself and you got a fi-fi.

Male [00:15:50.00]: Huh? Like a, uh, magazine?

Earlone [00:15:54.22]: You're getting warm.

Male [00:15:56.02]: [laughs] [quick, rising beat into chill music]

Nigel [00:16:07.11]: Ok. So, here's a question. We're talking about looking good and feeling good. And one way to feel good is to stay connected with your friends. But, in prison, that's not always possible.

Earlone [00:16:16.29]: Nah. We're locked in our cells at night. And, when there's a lockdown, you might not get out for weeks. So, if you want to communicate with someone in your cell block, you gotta go fishin'.

Nigel [00:16:28.21]: Yeah, Earlone, I've heard about this, but I've never really understood how it works.

Earlonne [00:16:32.16]: Fishin' is like a fishin' pole. If you can think of a fishin' pole. A fishin' pole got a string on it with a weight on the end of it and you just reach back and you throw it into the water and it just go. Phew! But, instead of a lake, it's down the tier, cement slab. But, let's let Jesse Vasquez break it down.

Jesse [00:16:51.04]: Yeah, so fishin' is a form of communication. It's, instead of yelling from, you know, ten cells away, it's easier to just write a note and then put it inside a little current, and then just push it out your door and have them pull it in, and then that's the way we use to communicate.

Nigel [00:17:07.15]: For an outsider, it's hard to imagine just how exactly this works. So, I asked Jesse to explain the technique, which he had to learn when he first got to prison. [prison background noise]

Jesse [00:17:17.07]: And then, I found out that I could fish next door by wrapping a piece of soap in a plastic, you know, the chip bag, the one that looks like aluminum. You know, so you put a soap in there because it glides on the floor easily. So, you tie it to a piece of string, and then you're able to swing it next door. But, if you want to travel ten cells down the tier, it's like, man, now you need some ingenuity. So, you get the toothpaste tube, you know, the Colgate, [sound of fishing] the tube has to weight enough to where, when you push it, you'll propel it all the way down the tier so that somebody else can pull it in. Then, you put your little, like a staple or a paper clip, at the front of it, so then you can grab onto somebody else's line. And then, once you get it ready, then you just kind of aim in the direction you want to go and just swish. As long as you can get it onto the tier, someone else can fish you into their cell. And then, they'll pull you in and then tie you onto somebody else and that will help you get further along the way.

Nigel [00:18:21.26]: How do you let them know that the fish is coming?

Jesse [00:18:23.18]: Oh, you just let them know that, uh, that you're gonna throw your line out. So, you scream down the tier one time, you know, "Excuse me!" You know, "Hey, I'm gonna send my line down." And then, he says, "All right! Shoot it!" Then, once he gets it, then you just tell him one time if you only have one item on there, two times if you've got two thing on your line. Sometimes you want to send a burrito. Sometimes you want to send a-

Nigel [00:18:47.16]: No! You can't send a burrito.

Jesse [00:18:48.21]: Of course you can. You put it in a trash bag and then you smash it down. And then, whoop, it goes out. Once your fish line is out there, then you can just fish burritos, soup, a spread, all kind of stuff.

Nigel [00:19:01.24]: What if a CO sees what you're doing?

Jesse [00:19:04.15]: A lot of times it's prohibited, you know, we're not really supposed to be fishing, but sometimes, you know, they figure it's just a part of what we're doing, and as long as it's not like drink, 'cause, I mean, I remember times when there was guys fishing alcohol, like homemade pruno and stuff like that. And that was funny to me, because it's like, man, you must be a real alcoholic to be fishing some, you know, homemade pruno. [upbeat music]

Nigel [00:19:30.12]: So, when was the last time you fished?

Earlone [00:19:32.05]: I haven't fished in years. I probably lost my license. [both laugh]

Nigel [00:19:37.06]: Uh, so he mentioned pruno, and that brings us to a way of feeling good that may not be kosher with prison officials. [both laugh] Earlone, I heard that, in your younger days, a long, long time ago, you knew someone who made pruno.

Earlone [00:19:50.12]: You ain't heard nothin' like that, Nigel.

Nigel [00:19:52.11]: [laughs] But, I'm sure you've never had it, right?

Earlone [00:19:53.25]: Nah. Not at all. Never. Neva! But, I can tell you how it's made.

Nigel [00:20:00.02]: All right. Share that.

Earlone [00:20:01.29]: So, you can do like this, here. [noises like making pruno] You get some fruit, you can chop it up or grate it up, this fruit. You got it in the bag, so you can squeeze it out, but you're gonna need a sock. Throw some ketchup in there with the fruit. [Nigel makes horrified noise] A little bit of [overlapping noise and talking] Jelly. And after about seven days of that process, you're good to go. [upbeat music]

Nigel [00:20:20.22]: Where's the ketchup come in?

Earlone [00:20:21.25]: You use the ketchup for like, what I hear, a raspy taste. [both laugh] It just give it a different taste than pruno, because pruno is an acquired taste.

Nigel [00:20:32.04]: Yeah, so, how does it taste?

Earlone [00:20:34.15]: I couldn't tell you. Never touched the stuff.

Nigel [00:20:38.15]: [laughs] Ok. Well, that's one way to escape prison life, at least for a while. Now we're going to hear about another.

Mesro [00:20:44.26]: A lot of the time, there was like the Daughtry, where there might be some paladins in full armor carrying their swords and shields, ugh, going towards various temples. Uh, sometimes there might be a bard or two playing a guitar or a lute on the side, uh, singing for a few coins.

Earlone [00:21:00.04]: Season one listeners might remember that voice. He was in the episode about the unwritten rules of race.

Mesro [00:21:06.14]: My name is George Cole. I am better known as Mesro, the human son, dungeon master, and Magic The Gathering player. [lute music]

Nigel [00:21:18.09]: Whenever you see Mesro, he has this really cool deck of cards on him.

Earlone [00:21:21.22]: Mesro always got a gang of deck of cards on him, and it's really interesting 'cause they're all handmade.

Nigel [00:21:27.11]: That's right. So, he takes a pinochle deck.

Earlone [00:21:29.21]: Right.

Nigel [00:21:30.01]: He covers it with plastic sleeves.

Earlone [00:21:31.18]: The sleeve, yeah.

Nigel [00:21:32.18]: And then he puts photocopies of-

Earlonne [00:21:35.10]: Dungeon masters, or Dungeons & Dragons, or wizards, or goblins, or goons, I don't know.

Nigel [00:21:40.18]: [laughs] Yeah, and you know, the other thing is, they look beautiful, because they're so weathered. He's touching them all the time, so they're, I don't know, they're super worn-in, and you can just tell they've been handled thousands of times. They've got a personality.

Earlonne [00:21:52.26]: And the crazy part is, he walks around with them all the time.

Mesro [00:21:57.25]: [sound of deck being shuffled] Yeah. I keep a deck with me all the time because we have a standing rule of, uh... See, a Magic The Gathering game can happen at any time, so if somebody comes up and they pull out their deck and you don't have yours, that's a loss. Once the game starts, like the, the San Quentin environment kind of fades away. We're sitting in there now trying to figure out how we're going to stop this evil queen from destroying the world or trying to find an artifact that's gonna help us save an enslaved race. So, a lot of the time, you know, we don't really think about, "Ok, there's a bunch of dirt under our feet." We get transported to a place where we can be heroes.

Nigel [00:22:34.20]: That's what I want to know. Where are you transported to? Describe to me what that transported world looks like.

Mesro [00:22:40.08]: A lot of the time, uh, [lute music] hamlets and towns in Dungeons & Dragons games are usually set in places of wilderness. So, around them there's, you know, rolling hills, tall trees, uh, the occasional dragon flying by, sun blazing in the sky, maybe there might be a couple of clouds there around you. You might see the castle of the queen or whatever monarch is in the background. You know, there's usually horse-drawn carriages. Some of them are selling medicine out of the back of them. Some of them are snake oil salesmen, so be careful. Don't just go just buying just anything. You might end up buying some water, you know, in the name of some tonic. Uh, but most of the time, there's just people are walking by, uh, being friendly to each other. Often, another part, in the distance, there might be some farmland there where people are, you know, tilling their rows and making sure they're having crops for the season before the harvest happens.

Earlonne [00:23:32.12]: So, I went over to one of the games, and I go through there. I just stop through 'cause Mesro might acknowledge me and give me dap. [Mesro laughs]

And I sit there for a minute and I'm just lookin' down at a board. It's nothing like, but like a white plastic sheet with, uh, some black marker on it, and there's maybe a dot or two and some lines and... So, I'm sittin' here and I'm listenin', and it's just going over my head. So, Mesro, how would you lure me into this?

Mesro [00:24:00.22]: Uh, let's see. So, you know, we'll say you're this traveling man from, uh, the great metropolitan city of Los Angelesville. It's massive. It's got a giant castle in the middle of it, right, sittin' on top of a pyramid. Uh, uh, we're right here in the marketplace, but you got kids playing football way in the back. What do you do?

Earlonne [00:24:20.21]: Go and join that football game.

Mesro [00:24:22.05]: Ok. So, you're back behind this guy and he's calling out the plays, right. He's callin' out, uh, "Cyclops thirty-two! Cyclops thirty-two! Hut! Hut!" And, when the ball gets into his hands, right over the hill, a giant cyclops comes walking up. He's got this great big horned head, kind of like a unicorn's horn, except it's tilted and like, it's like broken at the end. And he says, "I'm Eruditus!" [knocks on table] "Many travels I have had. I see a bunch of scrambling lads. Hmm. I need to eat the three of you and then take over your crown. So, try not to kick on the way down." And he proceeds to chase all of you all playing football. What do you do?

Earlonne [00:25:08.22]: Wake up. [both laugh]

[intro beats] You got the lotion.

You ever heard of a fi-fi bag in prison?

Male [00:25:24.09]: Yeah, yeah. I heard of a fi-fi bag when I first came in, 1983. It was some brothers came down from solitary, right. And he said, "Come on, dirty man. Let's go to dayroom, man." I said, "Ok." He said, "Wait a minute. Let me grab my fi-fi bag." I said, "Grab your what?" He said, "My fi-fi bag." He said, "Man, that's that bag, man, you know. You gonna put some baby oil in it with some hot water." I said, "What the hell?"

Male [00:25:46.00]: Oh, wow. This is some perverted stuff, huh?

Male [00:25:49.00]: They told me you got a different couple of times.

Earlonne [00:25:50.25]: What you mean "they told me"?



Male [00:25:52.10]: Well, 'cause my boy had one, but he said they got different, 'cause they got the kind they make in YA. Then, they got the kind they make in the pen, he said is different. But, the one he had, he made out of towel. He had a towel and he had a, uh, uh, uh, uh, a glove. Yeah. He has a glove wrapped around the towel, and he put uh, uh, uh... He put Vaseline. Well, he had baby oil in his, but he said some people put Vaseline in 'em. Nah. I ain't never actually had one myself.

Earlone [00:26:14.16]: You had to. Come on, man.

Male [00:26:15.17]: No, he had a couple of them joints.

Earlone [00:26:17.16]: If the police come in the cell and they find two fi-fis, you know one yours, right?

Male [00:26:20.15]: I don't know, man. So, I was young, man, so I was, I didn't even really think about it. I had just come to pen, matter fact, I had just came to prison. I didn't give a shit. I mean, he was doin' what he was doin'. He was tellin' me, but he was like, "Yeah, man. It's like you do it." Throw the towel back and he'd wrap the glove around it and he put that, he put baby oil. He put baby oil in his. Then, he said, in the Y, he said they used to put them up to their lights and heat 'em up. And that's how I found out about that part. So. [all laugh] Yeah, so he said to heat 'em up, man. It'd be like, he said, he said that they would put like, on the end of the bunk, on their mattress, and right there. Go to work. I was like, man, that's crazy. Simple way. Use the hand. [all laugh, overlapping voices] That's too much to me. All that extra stuff. Gettin' the glove ready and all that. But, it's just weird how people in prison will have like their little pastimes. It's like, that's what you doin'. And, it's crazy, because if I was on the streets and all, I would think it was weird. I'd be like, "Man, that's some weird stuff." In here, when people say it in here, it's not weird to me. It's just like, that's him doin' him. [rhythmic music]

Nigel [00:27:36.17]: When we come back after the break, it will be count time.

Earlone [00:27:38.26]: That's the postgame part of the podcast when we play a little take that we think is interesting.

Nigel [00:27:44.08]: Or curious.

Earlone [00:27:45.04]: Or funny.

Nigel [00:27:46.13]: We really just want you to hear it.

Earlone [00:27:47.16]: And this time, we'll have an outtake from today's podcast.  
[music opens up with vocalizing]

Female [00:28:02.27]: [rolling beat] Thanks for supporting 'Ear Hustle' by listening. If you or your company would like to take this a step further and sponsor the show, just drop a line to sponsor at Radiotopia.fm and thanks.

Male voices [00:28:22.05]: [bell ringing] Count time! Hey, count time! Thomas! Gaines! Gaines! Behind you! Line up! Behind you!

Nigel [00:28:33.14]: You have no wrinkles. Your skin is-

Earlone [00:28:36.01]: Seriously? You're 56?

Jae [00:28:37.07]: I'm really 56 years old.

Nigel [00:28:38.08]: Your skin is flawless. There's no pores. There's no wrinkles. How the hell is your skin so-

Jae [00:28:42.28]: Ok, so-

Earlone [00:28:43.21]: Hold on. 56. What year? Real quick.

Jae [00:28:45.16]: [laughs] 1961.

Nigel [00:28:47.02]: She's right.

Jae [00:28:48.03]: Ok. I know my age. I don't have to lie, just because I look fabulous don't mean that I'm not that age. So, here's the secret. Now, all black people know this secret, especially those that were born in the South.

Earlone [00:28:59.15]: It's called genes.

Jae [00:29:00.21]: Genes is one thing, but when you have a newborn baby in the house, you take their early morning diaper with the pee on it, and you just wipe your face with it. And it only takes like maybe once or twice to do this, and your skin will

be perpetually young.

Nigel [00:29:15.14]: So-

Jae [00:29:15.28]: Baby pee. [laughs]

Nigel [00:29:16.21]: I didn't get the opportunity to do that. Is it too late for me?

Jae [00:29:20.00]: No, it's not. No, it's not. It can reverse the sign of aging. Baby pee.

Earlonne [00:29:24.29]: That might be a crime now, though.

Jae [00:29:27.13]: [laughs] It might be, but no, no. [bell ringing] That's an old, ancient thing that my mother and her mother and her mother- [upbeat, funky outro music]

Nigel [00:29:39.10]: Thanks to everyone who talked to us for this episode. Jesse Vasquez, Andres Yancey, Lady Jae.

Earlonne [00:29:44.25]: David Jassy, Wall Street, Jason Jones.

Nigel [00:29:47.16]: Eric Durr, Mesro El Cole.

Earlonne [00:29:49.24]: And Nicola Bucci.

Nigel [00:29:51.01]: And, if you want to hear more about Bucci's foray into edible granola bars, check out the next episode of the 'Sporkful'. That's a food podcast, and in an upcoming episode, they're playing a special Bucci outtake.

Earlonne [00:30:03.06]: We'd also like to thank Ted Koppel for reading our language advisory at the top of the show.

Nigel [00:30:07.11]: Yep. He was in here recently to do a piece about 'Ear Hustle' for 'CBS Sunday Morning'. At the time of this recording, it hasn't aired yet. But if and when it does, and you saw it and that's why you decided to check us out, thanks and welcome.

Earlonne [00:30:24.19]: 'Ear Hustle' is produced by myself, Earlonne Woods, and Nigel Poor with help from outside producer Pat Mesiti-Miller, who also comes in to work

with the sound design team. This episode was scored with music by David Jassy, with contributions from Antwan Williams and Lee Jasper. Our story editor is Curtis Fox and our executive producer for Radiotopia is Julie Shapiro. And a special shoutout to Erin. Thanks for all your help and support.

Nigel [00:30:51.23]: Yep. We really appreciated it, and we're gonna miss you. We also want to thank Warden Ron Davis, and, as you know, every episode has to be approved by this guy here.

Lt. Sam Robinson [00:30:59.20]: This is Lieutenant Sam Robinson at San Quentin State Prison, and I guess I have a problem with just episodes number three with this 'Ear Hustle', because 'Looking Out', which was pets in prison wasn't my favorite. And, thus far, for season two, this one is not my favorite, but, as usual, I approve this story.

Nigel [00:31:19.23]: [laughs] Uh, what did we do wrong, Earlonne? [Earlonne laughs] Lieutenant did not like that.

Earlonne [00:31:25.04]: Eh. One thing I can say about him. He's tough but he's real. And we can't please everybody every time.

Nigel [00:31:30.13]: That's right.

Earlonne [00:31:30.21]: The next episode, though, he hasn't heard it yet, but I think he's gonna like it. It's about being a parent from prison.

Male [00:31:38.16]: It was like, man, like how am I gonna be. You know? Like, how am I supposed to show up now? Am I supposed to be like his partner? You know, am I supposed to be like Dad? Am I supposed to be like my father? Like, what am I supposed to do? You know. [outro music]

Earlonne [00:31:55.16]: 'Ear Hustle' is a proud member of Radiotopia from PRX, a collection of the best podcasts around. Hear more at Radiotopia.fm.

Nigel [00:32:04.05]: And if you want to learn more about us, please go to our website, earhustlesq.com, where you can also sign up for our newsletter, the Lowdown.

Earlonne [00:32:12.16]: Have you seen anyone like Queen Elizabeth, Beyonce, Rihanna, Oprah Winfrey wearing our 'Ear Hustle' t-shirt?

Nigel [00:32:24.02]: No, no, no. I haven't seen anybody yet, and I really hope it happens soon.

Earlone [00:32:27.28]: So, if you do, will you please post it on social media?

Nigel [00:32:32.02]: You don't even have to ask, because you know as soon as I see somebody wearing one, I am posting that.

Earlone [00:32:36.20]: Well, if that do happens, you know I cannot see it because we're in prison. We don't have internet access. But, you out there can. Follow us on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook at @earhustlesq. I'm Earlone Woods.

Nigel [00:32:51.02]: And I'm Nigel Poor. Thanks for listening.

Jesse [00:32:55.23]: It like... It smells bad. And I can't imagine tasting that stuff. I never touched it.

Nigel [00:33:00.09]: What does it smell like?

Jesse [00:33:02.06]: It smells like decomposed fruit and feet.

Nigel [00:33:08.13]: Doesn't sound good.

Jesse [00:33:09.21]: No.

Earlone [00:33:11.16]: [melodic notes] Hey listeners, guess what? To help kick off season two, we have brand new 'Ear Hustle' t-shirts.

Nigel [00:33:19.24]: And they are awesome.

Earlone [00:33:21.27]: Too bad I can't wear one inside.

Nigel [00:33:24.05]: 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.

Earlone [00:33:33.02]: Nig, wouldn't it be cool if you were walking down the street and you saw someone wearing one?

Nigel [00:33:36.17]: Oh, man. I would flip if I saw that, and you know what I would

do?

Earlone [00:33:39.13]: Hopefully, you'd take out your phone and take a picture.

Nigel [00:33:41.11]: 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.

Earlone [00:33:49.15]: Who would you like to see wearing one of our t-shirts?

Nigel [00:33:50.21]: People say I sound like her, and someone recently even said I look like her.

Earlone [00:33:54.25]: You talking about that podcast famous host of 'Serial', Sarah Koenig?

Nigel [00:33:58.26]: Mmhmm.

Earlone [00:33:59.21]: Is that who you talking about?

Nigel [00:34:00.13]: That's who I'm talking about. How about you?

Earlone [00:34:02.10]: I would like to see the Queen of England-

Nigel [00:34:04.26]: What? [laughing]

Earlone [00:34:05.17]: Sittin' all proper, drinkin' tea with a 'Ear Hustle' t-shirt on at the upcoming royal wedding.

Nigel [00:34:11.06]: That would be crazy.

Earlone [00:34:11.27]: Or Rihanna. Or Beyonce. Or Dale. Or-

Nigel [00:34:15.06]: 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.

Earlone [00:34:24.03]: And thanks for helping us spread the 'Ear Hustle' love on the outside.

Radiotopia outro [00:34:33.01]: Radiotopia from PRX.

Female [00:34:41.03]: Thanks for listening and thanks to Adzerk for providing their advertising platform to Radiotopia.