

Learning by Ear – HIV

"An Angel in Everyone" Episode 08

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CHARACTERS: Pinto, Angela, Jet, Traditional Healer, Annie,
Sister

INTRO .

Welcome back to Learning By Ear, and our new 10 –part radio drama series,

"An Angel in Everyone", which looks at teenagers and high risk behavior that makes them vulnerable to HIV and AIDS and sexually transmitted infections, or STIs.

Angela is pregnant and has moved in with Pinto the father. He is in denial about his poor health. Will Angela be able to persuade him to go for voluntary testing and counseling?

And is Jet finally going to give up on herbal medicines that have so far failed to cure his painful condition?

Find out as we listen to Episode Eight of "An Angel in Everyone."

Scene One. Interior. Morning**PINTO COUGHING THROUGHOUT**

1. **PINTO:** I'm OK Angela! Stop fussing.
2. **ANGELA:** But you're supposed to have a cough checked if you've been coughing for two weeks or more. Which you have. Here- have this warm tea. **(BEAT)** I'm going to Central Clinic tomorrow. I've been referred to the ante-natal section.
3. **PINTO:** Well you're pregnant! I'm not, just in case you think I'm going with you.
4. **ANGELA:** Pinto. I think we have to talk. Listen carefully now. The night we had sex – did you realized I was a virgin?
5. **PINTO:** No. I don't remember feeling anything.
6. **ANGELA:** Well I was. You were my very first. That's why it was so special for me. But –um- this is hard but I'm going to say it – every pregnant woman who goes to the clinic is asked if she will take an HIV test.
7. **PINTO:** Why?

- 8. ANGELA:** Because if the woman is HIV positive the doctor can offer her certain choices for a safe delivery. I signed the consent form and had an HIV test at Matula Clinic.
- 9. PINTO:** **(Coughing)** You? You've had the test? And?
- 10. ANGELA:** Pinto – I AM HIV positive.
- 11. PINTO:** **(groans)** Oh my God – oh my God! Have you infected me then? Is that was this cough is about?
- 12. ANGELA:** Oh Pinto – why are you being so obstinate? THINK! How could I infect you if I was a virgin? HIV is transmitted either through receiving contaminated blood – like during a blood transfusion, which I've never had, or through sharing needles injecting drugs- which I've **never** done. I was not infected when we met. So it must be the other way round. You were...you are HIV positive Pinto. You infected me- and who knows, maybe the baby.
- 13. PINTO:** **(Groaning)**You just want to blame me. You can't admit you slept with someone else so you're pinning this on me.

14. ANGELA: That's not true. You were my first and only. I'm just telling you – not blaming you. The AIDS Helpline [man told me]

15. PINTO: **(Interrupting)** The AIDS Helpline? Oh my God. Who else have you been talking to?

16. ANGELA: I needed to know Pinto- there's such a silence around all this. Nobody knows I'm HIV positive – not my mother, not Uncle Billy. Only my closest friends, but they couldn't tell me **what** this virus will do to me. So the AIDS Helpline explained but the counselor also told me not to play the blame game. He said it's a waste of my energy. I blame you for infecting me, then you blame the woman who infected you... It's like asking which came first - the chicken or the egg? None of us used condoms. That is the point.

17. PINTO: **(Groaning)** Ooh no. What are we going to do? What am I going to do?

18. ANGELA: Pinto. You need to know your HIV status. You can go for free voluntary counseling and testing. It's called VCT. You need to know your CD4 count or T-cell count.

19. PINTO: **(Skeptically)** What's that?

SFX: PAPER NOISE

20. ANGELA: Look ! It's all here in this pamphlet. **(Reading)**
"Your T-cell count, also known as a CD4 count, reveals the number of T cells in your body. A T cell is a special kind of white blood cell, and the more you have, the stronger your immune system is."
(STOPS READING)

21. ANGELA: So you see – they test your blood to see how many white cells you have and check you again to make sure. Then they know whether to put you on antiretrovirals or not. That's why it's so important to know your status.

22. PINTO: But you just told me my status – so I KNOW I’m HIV positive. Which means I’m going to die. I don’t need a stupid test to tell me what I already know!

FADE ON COUGHING

Scene Two At the traditional healer

TRADITIONAL MUSIC FADE UNDER

1. JET: Ubaba – the itching and burning are still there. The herbal potion has cleaned me out all right. I’ve had the runs for a week and I can’t take any more. I’m exhausted.

2. HEALER: Your ancestors are angry with you, Jet. You must ask their forgiveness and use rub this paste on your rash.

3. JET: I will ask their forgiveness but I can’t put this stuff on any more. It burns. I can’t go to work because I keep running to the toilet.

4. HEALER: I have one last option,- to write you a referral letter for the Matula Clinic.

5. JET: Not Matula Ubaba – please. Send me to Central Clinic –it’s

6. HEALER: **(Interrupting)** It's further away and you don't want anyone to recognise you. I know. I've heard it all before. This letter costs 500 Rands. Cash. Can you pay?

7. JET: Yes- it's the last of my last month's wages.

SFX: **PEN SCRATCHING ON PAPER. PAPER NOISE**

8. HEALER: The department of health officer has been trying for months to get us to cooperate. So we refer patients with coughs and sores, and symptoms like yours to government clinics. This way we're all happy.

SFX: **VERBALLY COUNTING MONEY AND SMALL CHANGE**

MUSIC BRIDGE

Scene Three. At the clinic

1. ANNIE: **(Phone voice)** Angela? I'm next in line at the dispensary. Where are you?

2. ANGELA: I'm about to be called. I should be out in the ten minutes.

3. ANNIE: OK. Then I'll come over to you when I'm done here.

Hey – just a minute – I can see Jet.

4. ANGELA: Jet?

5. ANNIE: Yes. Listen! I'll see you in just a minute. Bye.

6. SISTER: Angela Selebi? Come this way please.

SFX: FOOTSTEPS ECHO DOWN CORRIDOR. DOOR OPEN/CLOSE.

OFFICE AMBIENCE. DISTANT PHONE RINGING/TANNOY VOICE

CALLING.

MUSIC BRIDGE

FADE IN SISTER SPEAKING: So it's important Angela that you

understand what choices you have. There's a new department of health ruling giving this clinic the green light to offer HIV positive mothers AZT . Don't worry about the name! It's a drug that works very well in the weeks leading up to the birth, in your case about 10 weeks. So we can start now.

7. ANGELA: Sister –I need to know - do I have to pay for any of this?

8. SISTER: Well no. This is a government clinic and the antiretroviral roll out campaign means you get them

for free. You are so lucky because you live close by. Many women in rural areas don't have access to any of this- don't even get to hear about it.

9. ANGELA:

I saw the lines of people at Matula Clinic. They wait for a day and then they are turned away empty handed.

10. SISTER:

I realize treatment is very unequal. But we can treat you. As long as you understand Angela- we can't cure you – This treatment only helps to keep your CD4 levels up. But they can still fall if you get other infections. What we can do is radically reduce the risk of HIV transmission to your baby by giving you **both** this anti HIV drug.

11. ANGELA:

How will you do that?

12. SISTER:

Well - during delivery you will be given a single dose of Nevirapine and baby will get one too soon after birth. You and your baby will then continue taking the other antiretroviral, AZT, for seven days after the birth. He will be tested for HIV at six weeks and again at 18 months.

- 13. ANGELA:** And ? Could he be born negative when we are positive?
- 14. SISTER:** Yes. We're looking at getting the transmission rates to below five per cent.
- 15. ANGELA:** And if I want to breastfeed?
- 16. SISTER;** Then you must be careful and **only** breast feed for six months and not to mix any food, formula milk, even water, into the baby's system because that could introduce tiny scratches into the tender lining of the baby's stomach and then the virus could be transmitted from your milk into your baby's blood. So, choose. Either exclusively breast-feed or exclusively formular feed. For six whole months.
- 17. ANGELA:** Then I'll exclusively breast feed.
- 18. SISTER:** And you have thought about natural birth or caesarian?
- 19. ANGELA:** Why is a caesarian less risky for the baby?
- 20. SISTER:** A caesarian means lifting the baby out instead of you pushing and perhaps bleeding internally and scratching the baby in the pushing. The virus could

be transmitted to the baby through blood in a natural childbirth. OK?

21. ANGELA: You explain everything so well Sister!

22. SISTER: Good! Now –next question. Are you having sex with your partner? I ask because you told me he must be HIV positive. In that case- you must insist on a condom. Or abstain.

And come regularly every 6 months for testing.

23. ANGELA: But Pinto refuses to come at all. He's afraid he'll die. What can I tell him?

24. SISTER: Tell him he **can** live with the virus. It's the **fear** that kills.

END OF EPISODE EIGHT

OUTRO.

"An Angel in Everyone" was written by Romie Singh.

And that's all from Learning By Ear for today.

Annie has spotted Jet at the Clinic – how will she go about him? And Djamila fights off her uncle with her teeth! Join us for Episode Nine.

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