

Learning by Ear

“Once upon a time...in Africa”

Episode 6: “SLAVERY”

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CHARACTERS:

Intro/Outro (female/male)

Scene 1:

- Mum (38, female)
- June (13, female)
- Grandpa (77, male)

Scene 2:

- 1. Man (32, male)
- Captain (40, male)
- 2. Man (35, male)
- Slaves (all ages, both genders)
- June (13, female)
- Mum (38, female)

Scene 3:

- June (13, female)
- Grandpa (77, male)
- Mum (38, female)

Scene 4:

- Foreman (40, male)
- London (25, male)
- Nobody (30, male)
- Ship (20, male)
- Children (both genders)
- Slaves (all ages/both genders)

Scene 5:

- Mum (38, female)
- June (13, female)
- Grandpa (77, male)

Intro:

Hello and welcome to another episode of “Once upon a time... in Africa”, the “Learning by Ear” series about African History! In today’s episode, June is very angry when she arrives home because of the behavior of her school mates towards their new classmate, Philipp. Philipp is the son of a German couple who moved to the village recently. The reason why some of the students in June’s class were unfriendly to Philipp came up during a history class, when the teacher spoke about slavery. But slavery happened a long, long time ago. Now, June wants to know from Grandpa Peter if that’s a reason to mistreat the new boy. Stay with us!

Music 1, then cross fade with SFX

First Scene: At home at the end of the afternoon.

SFX: House door being banged, footsteps approaching, kitchen (pots, fire). In the background: chicken, goats, birds, then fade under

- 1. Mum:** Hey, little girl! That's not how I taught you to close the door!
- 2. June:** I'm sorry, Mum! I didn't do it on purpose...
- 3. Grandpa:** Don't you greet people anymore?
- 4. June:** Hi, Grandpa!
- 5. Grandpa:** What's up? Did something happen at school?
- 6. June:** The boys from the class don't want to play with Philipp anymore because Mrs. Milton taught us about slavery today. But, Grandpa, the fact that he's white doesn't mean he's guilty for what happened so long ago, does it? His parents even came to Mbazi to help constructing the new boreholes...

7. Grandpa: Of course, he isn't, Daughter! But unfortunately, slavery left very deep wounds that have been passed down from generation to generation. However, none of us lived at that time!

8. June: **(perplexed)** How could it be possible that the whole world accepted buying and selling people as if they were things? Were they all crazy?

9. Grandpa: Well, if they were, my dear, and they must have been, then it was literally the whole world. Don't think the Europeans were the only ones! On the east coast of Africa, for example, slaves had been exported for many centuries to Asia, the Middle East, India... In exchange for spices, porcelain, silk... And that happened long before the Europeans had even seen a black person! By the time they came, that er..., let's say, market, already existed. But when people talk about slavery nowadays, the image that often comes to mind is one of white people subjugating black people. And the reason for that is that the Europeans were the ones who traded in slaves the most.

10. June: Mrs. Milton said they were taken to America...

- 11. Mum:** **(from a distance)** June! Don't stay there talking with Grandpa! Go do your homework! Oh, Father, let the girl do her school work!
- 12. Grandpa:** **(speaking loudly)** Emily, June has to understand the stuff before doing her homework! **(talking to June)** Mrs. Milton is right! I mean, after the Europeans settled in Brazil and South America in general, the Caribbean and North America, yes. Then, at the end of the fifteenth century, they started taking thousands of slaves to work on the plantations there. And they took the products they grew there, back to Europe: tobacco, sugar, cotton... It was called the Triangular Trade.
- 13. June:** **(curious)** What was life like for a slave, Grandpa?
- 14. Grandpa:** We'll come to that. But first there is one more thing you shouldn't forget, June. The Europeans committed huge cruelties – that's for sure! But they shared some of the guilt with African traders and with African chiefs who sold their people to the whites or to middlemen. That was a fact, unfortunately! Now, imagine you lived at that time and you and Mum had been captured in your village and taken to the coast...

Flashback music

Second Scene: On a slave ship.

SFX: Someone running down wooden stairs. In the background: sea waves hitting ship hulk, seagulls, then fade under

15. 1. Man: (breathless) Captain, Captain! We've arrived! We should be off the coast of Barbados in a short time!

16. Captain: That's good news! (shouting) Prepare the slaves! Wash and oil them! Dirty and stinking as they are, nobody will buy them from me! Extra oil on those who have whip scars! (murmuring, sarcastic) They have to look very pretty, all my dear ones, as they make me Liverpool's richest man... (shouting) I've lost too many people on this trip! I don't want to lose one more! You hear that?

SFX: Door being unlocked (key and chain), someone banging his head against a wooden wall. Background: sea waves hitting ship hulk, seagulls, then fade under

17. 2. Man: **(aggressive)** Haahhh! What a smell!
(murmuring) How can these creatures
spend a journey lasting two months
wallowing in excrement? **(shouting)** Heh,
everyone out! Now! Come on! You there
banging your head! You won't get anywhere
by pretending you've gone crazy! Your home,
sweet home, is a long, long way away now.
Now, come on! And you, too! Come on,
everyone!

SFX: Whip hitting wooden floor, many people standing up and walking slowly, iron chains being pulled on wooden floor.

Background: sea waves hitting ship hulk, seagulls, then fade under

18. 2. Man: **(aggressive)** Hurry up! I don't have all day!
(speaking loudly to colleague) John, go get
the women!

SFX: Water being splashed on people, someone rubbing the bodies with a brush, iron chains on wooden floor, children weeping, murmurings of fear. Background: sea waves hitting ship hulk, seagulls, then fade under

19. Slaves of every age: Ah! No! Ai! Ahhhhhh!

20. 2. Man: **(aggressive)** Be quiet! I still have one hundred more to wash!

SFX: Man weeping and sobbing, someone throwing an anchor into the water. Background: sea waves hitting ship hulk, seagulls, then fade under

21. Captain: **(sarcastic, happy)** Aren't they pretty? And ain't I rich, rich, rich?

22. June: **(weeping, shouting)** Mum!! Muuum! Don't let them take me! I'm so afraid!

23. Mum: **(weeping, shouting)** Juuune! My daughter! Don't take her away from me!

Flashback music

Third Scene: At home at the end of the afternoon.

SFX: Kitchen (pots, fire). In the background: chicken, goats, birds, then fade under

24. June: (weeping, sobbing) How terrible, Grandpa!
How terrible! Did it really happen like that?

25. Grandpa: Unfortunately, my child, it must have been more or less like that! And it wasn't only one ship transporting slaves to the Americas! The Spaniards started, soon the Portuguese followed and, in this case, it was the British. People often state that they abolished slavery in 1807 but during the century that preceded its abolition, the British were the ones who exported the most Africans! They even surpassed the Portuguese!

26. June: (sobbing but less) And what happened when they arrived, Grandpa?

27. Grandpa: Well, as soon as they reached land, they were sold. Either at slave markets or at the beach itself. The price was negotiated according to various criteria: sex age, health, looks, strength...

28. June: And where did all those slaves come from, Grandpa?

29. Grandpa: At that time, Europeans rarely travelled into Africa's interior. So the majority of the slaves came from the west coast – from Ghana, Benin, the Ivory Coast, Senegal... but especially from Angola and the Congo Empire. From there they were taken to the colonies – either in Africa or elsewhere.

30. June: **(curious)** And... and after being sold, what kind of lives did the slaves lead in the colonies?

31. Mum: **(from a distance)** Father, June has homework to do!

32. Grandpa: **(speaking loudly)** It won't take long, Emily!

June giggling

33. Grandpa: Their lives, my daughter, their lives were terrible! On the sugar plantations, for instance, and in Barbados there were plenty of them. Punishment could start very early in the morning...

Flashback music

Fourth Scene: On a sugar plantation in Barbados.

SFX: Bell calling all slaves. Footsteps from many people approaching, running on gravel path. Background: crickets, then fade under

34. Foreman: (shouting aggressively) Everyone get in line to be counted! Now! (pause) London!

35. London: (submissive) Here, sir!

36. Foreman: Nobody!

37. Nobody: (submissive) Here, sir!

38. Foreman: Ship!

Silence

39. Foreman: Ship! (pause, then aggressive) Does anyone know where Ship is?

SFX: Footsteps hobbling, approaching on gravel path. In the background: crickets, then fade under

40. Ship: (breathless) I'm here, sir!

41. Foreman: (aggressive) You're late! You should have been here when I called! Why weren't you?

42. Ship: (submissive) I'm sorry, Sir! Look at my foot, Sir! I can hardly walk with this wound!

43. Foreman: (aggressive) I will show you how you're going to walk! Come here! I'll teach you to be late. (shouting) This is for everyone to see!

44. Ship: (submissive, afraid) No, Sir, don't do it to me! I promise I won't come late to the count anymore! But, please, don't whip me again!

SFX: Someone dragging another person, Ship shouting. Whip hitting someone's back. Background: children weeping, crickets, then fade under

45. Foreman: **(shouting, while whipping)** You'll shout as you learn! Shout louder, I like it when you shout! We won't get anywhere without discipline? Shout!

SFX: Whip hitting someone's back, Ship weeping, sobbing with pain. In the background: children weeping, crickets, then fade under

46. Foreman: **(aggressive)** Now stand up and get to work! See, you're walking very well now that you've warmed up! **(speaking to all)** All of you! Now, everyone get to work, there's lots to do!

SFX: Cock crowing

Flashback music

Fifth Scene: At home in the evening.

SFX: Kitchen (pots, fire, kerosene lamp). In the background: crickets, then fade under

47. Mum: (from a distance) June, go do your homework before I get angry!

48. June: (speaking loudly) Just a minute, Mum, I promise! (talking to Grandpa, curious) Grandpa, what were those names? London, Ship...?

49. Grandpa: When the slaves were sold, the new masters often changed their names – normally to names of things or places. By doing that, they intended to take away not only their names but their identity, too...

50. June: Idiots! (pause) But tell me, Grandpa, was it always like that, every day suffering in the same way?

- 51. Grandpa:** Yes, Daughter, every time a slave did something that didn't please the foreman, he was punished. You know, June, when the Europeans started buying slaves to work on the sugar, cotton or tobacco plantations, they did it because they noticed that Europeans weren't used to tropical climate, and died of tropical illnesses or of the work itself. Sugar work, for instance, was very arduous.
- 52. June:** How... how did the slaves manage to live like that?
- 53. Grandpa:** A normal workday lasted fifteen hours. Conditions were so bad that slaves started to rebel! Until slavery was finally abolished there were many revolts – for instance, in Barbados. The island even got the nickname “Little England” because after sugar cane had been introduced there, it became the most important of all the British colonies. But everything came from slave work just like in the other European colonies!
- 54. June:** But after slavery was abolished Europeans still stayed here... What more did they want?

55. Grandpa:

As soon as they couldn't benefit from slaves anymore, they realised that they could still usurp the land and exploit the natural resources in Africa... **(pause)** But now, you'd better go and do your school work!

Outro:

And this is the end of the sixth episode of "Once upon a time... in Africa", the "Learning by Ear" series about African History! It's hard to imagine that such cruelties took place on a daily basis, isn't it?

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Good-bye until next time!