

LEARNING BY EAR 2012

"I am still human- A story of Africa's mentally ill"

EPISODE 3: "Looking for answers"

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List of characters by scene:

SCENE ONE: MALEMBA AND CHUMBA ARRIVE AT MIZANJA'S SHRINE

- Malemba (f, 35)
- Mizanja (m, 65)
- Narrator

SCENE TWO: VALERIE AND IRENE AT THE CANTEEN

- Valerie (f, 19)
- Irene (f, 19)
- Narrator

SCENE THREE: VALERIE GOES TO SEE DR.MAHIRO AT THE GENERAL HOSPITAL

- Valerie (f, 19)
- Mahiro (m, 50)

INTRO:

Hello and welcome to your favourite educational radio novella Learning by Ear. This is the third episode of our continuing drama on mental illness in Africa entitled **"I am still human"**. In the last episode, the nursing student Valerie started hearing voices. This scared her friend and room mate Irene who later ran for help. In the village, Malemba was sent back with her son Chumba who was ill with a fever, because Nurse Matilda could not deal with a mentally ill person. And Kapaka who lost his job at the supermarket, shocked his wife Cheupe by missing choir practise, something he had never done before. We are only beginning to find out about the problems of mentally ill persons and how they are so often neglected and stigmatized. Today's episode is called **"Looking for answers"**.

It is late in the evening when Malemba arrives with her feverish child Chumba at Mizanja's traditional healing shrine.

SCENE ONE: MALEMBA AND CHUMBA ARRIVE AT MIZANJA'S SHRINE

1. **ATMO:** **EVENING AMBIENCE IN THE VILLAGE**

2. **MIZANJA:** **(singing songs that can't be understood)**

3. **MALEMBA:** Good evening, Mizanja, great traditional healer.

4. **MIZANJA:** Good evening, Malemba. What can I do for you and your son?

5. **MALEMBA:** He is sick and feverish, with a very high temperature. I think he also has a headache. Can you give him something to relieve him of this pain?
6. **MIZANJA:** **(a little grumpy)** Don't you usually go to the hospital with fever and high temperatures? Besides, I am almost finished for the day.
7. **MALEMBA:** I just came back from there, and the nurse wouldn't even let us see the doctor. She said Chumba was mentally ill and the local clinic could not handle such a case. She recommended that I take Chumba to the city for specialized treatment. She literally chased us out of the clinic, saying Chumba was scaring other patients. I have no money to take him to the city. That's why I came to you.
8. **MIZANJA:** **(thoughtful and more friendly)** Mmmh, I wonder when the time will come that our people realize that mental illness is just as crucial as any other illness and begin to treat patients as humans. Okay, I will give you some herbs that you can boil and give him tonight. He seems to be quiet, so that means he is not in so much pain.
9. **MALEMBA:** He is normally quiet in the evening. Those evil spirits attack him mostly during the day, especially around midday.

10. MIZANJA: Maybe you should bring him back to me again another day, so that I can have a chat with those spirits. I want to hear why they have chosen to torment your son. For now though, here, take this.

11. SFX: SEVERAL LEAVES BEING PLUCKED FROM A PLANT

Or: Branch being ripped off a tree then handed over

KW begin

12. MIZANJA: Boil these leaves and then have Chumba drink the liquid. It will help to bring down the fever. Go now, and don't look back. I am about to bid goodnight to my ancestors. **(starts to sing again)**

13. MALEMBA: Thank you Mizanja. Thank you so much. Come now Chumba, let's go home. All is going to be well.

KW end

14. NARRATOR: Once again, Malemba and Chumba head home, with Malemba holding in one hand the herbs that Mizanja has given her, and in the other her son. Will Chumba get better? Let's wait and see. The following day at the medical clinic canteen, Valerie is strangely back to her normal self, causing Irene to wonder what it is that happened to her friend the other day.

SCENE TWO: VALERIE AND IRENE AT THE CANTEEN

15. ATMO: COLLEGE CANTEEN AMBIENCE

16. VALERIE: What is it Irene? Why are you staring at me as if you are seeing me for the first time?

17. IRENE: Uhm... sorry, Valerie. But I just don't know what to think anymore! I remember very clearly you saying yesterday that you were hearing voices, and you were not joking. Then, as soon as I ran for help and came back, there you were calm and composed as if nothing had happened.

KW begin

18. VALERIE: That's because nothing really happened! Listen, I probably was talking aloud to myself, that's all. You got scared and thought I was going crazy (**laughs**). I am sorry that this incident made *you* look like the crazy person.

19. IRENE: It's ok. But Valerie, please don't pull that trick on me again. If you do, I am going to have to change rooms.

KW end

20. VALERIE: (**laughs softly**) Hey, don't worry. I'm fine.

21. IRENE: Wait, I will be right back, I just need to go to the ladies room.

22. VALERIE: I will come with you.

(They both laugh and stand up)

23. NARRATOR: Irene thinks Valerie is fine and that all is well now. But it doesn't take long for her to realize that she is dead wrong. As soon as they enter the ladies room, all hell breaks loose....again.

24. SFX: **TOILET BEING FLUSHED**

25. SFX: **TOILET DOOR OPENING**

26. IRENE: Valerie! Hey, our food is getting cold. Wash your hands and let's get back. What are you staring at in the mirror anyway? Still admiring your pretty face?

27. VALERIE: **(mumbling words)** Who are you looking at?

28. IRENE: Who am I looking at? You of course!

29. VALERIE: **(louder, as if to somebody else)** Stop! Who are you talking to? I don't want to hear your voice!

30. IRENE: Stop your silly games! What do you mean you don't want to hear my voice? Ah, Valerie! Come on, our places will be taken if we stay here too long...

31. VALERIE: **(interrupts, shouting)** I said stop looking at me! Stop talking to me! **(angry)** Arrrgh!

32. SFX: **MIRROR BREAKING INTO PIECES AS SHE HITS IT WITH HER FIST**

33. VALERIE: **(screaming in pain)** Aaaah!

34. IRENE: Oh no! Valerie, you have cut yourself... Wait... hold on, Valerie, what is wrong with you?

35. VALERIE: Irene, what did you do? Why am I bleeding? What happened?

36. IRENE: I am the one who should be asking those questions. But let me first help stop the bleeding.

37. SFX: **ZIPPER OPENING, SEARCHING IN HER BAG**

38. IRENE: Here, let me tie this handkerchief around your hand.

39. SFX: **HANDKERCHIEF BEING WRAPPED AROUND HAND**

40. IRENE: I don't know what came over you. One moment you were talking to me nicely, the next thing I know you are screaming at your own reflection in the mirror. Valerie, you already scared me the first time. If I didn't know you I would say you have lost your mind. I really think you should see a psychiatrist before it gets worse. You can't go on like this.

41. VALERIE: **(crying)** I just don't know what it is. I can't control it.

42. NARRATOR: Irene is right. It is time for Valerie to find the answer to what is troubling her. Her behaviour is not only abnormal. It is also becoming dangerous. Luckily the psychiatrist is not so far away. After finishing their lunch without another word, Valerie goes straight to see Dr. Mahiro. He is the only psychiatrist in the country's general hospital mental unit, serving a population of almost 5 million people. Listen on.

SCENE THREE: VALERIE GOES TO SEE DR. MAHIRO AT THE GENERAL HOSPITAL

43. ATMO: **HOSPITAL AMBIENCE INSIDE DOCTOR'S ROOM**

44. MAHIRO: **(calls out)** Next!

45. SFX: **DOOR SLOWLY BEING OPENED**

46. MAHIRO: Yes, young lady, come in... sit down and tell me: What can I do for you?

47. VALERIE: **(embarrassed)** Well...um... my name is Valerie. I ...my friend Irene thinks I am going crazy and she says it's better if I saw a doctor. A psychiatrist. Since you are the only one available around here, I came to you.

48. MAHIRO: Okay. That's a start. So your friend believes you have a mental problem. What about you? Do you feel the same way?

49. VALERIE: I don't know. I think I am normal.

KW begin

50. MAHIRO: I deal with mentally ill and intellectually handicapped people everyday. I can tell you this, some people who think they are normal act much crazier than those who are considered mad. Anyway, back to our discussion.

KW end

Are you a nursing student?

51. VALERIE: **(shocked)** Well, yes! How did you know? Can you read my mind, too?

- 52. MAHIRO:** **(laughs heartily)** Hahaha... of course I can, what did you expect? I am a brain doctor after all! But jokes aside: no, I can't. But you are wearing a trainee gown and your wound has been bandaged in a professional way, surely by one of your fellow students? What happened to your hand? Did you accidentally cut yourself with a surgical blade?
- 53. VALERIE:** No Doctor. That's the scary part, I think I did this to myself. I mean, not intentionally, but in one of those... confusing states. How can I explain this? But Irene, my college friend, says I went to the bathroom and started shouting at my reflection in the mirror, and then I hit it with my hand breaking it and injuring myself.
- 54. MAHIRO:** Do you know why you did that?
- 55. VALERIE:** I guess I felt I was in danger. Irene says I have been reacting to voices that she couldn't hear. Is that possible? What is happening to me?
- 56. MAHIRO:** Valerie, I suggest that we meet on a regular basis. I would like to know exactly what is bothering you. From what you have told me, it could be possible that you are having a mental breakdown.
- 57. VALERIE:** **(shocked)** A mental breakdown?
- 58. MAHIRO:** Don't be scared. For now, I can't really be certain.

Mental illnesses take a long time to discover, there is no laboratory test or anything like that. At least not in our country. But I can assure you, that with proper medication and therapy it is possible to recover and continue with your life. So since I now have to visit the mental ward, I suggest you come back tomorrow.

59. VALERIE: Thanks Doctor. And you don't think I am crazy, do you?

60. MAHIRO: No. You are my patient. And I never call my patients crazy.

OUTRO:

With that assurance from Dr. Mahiro, we wrap up the third episode of this radio drama entitled, "**I am still human**", a Learning by Ear production focusing on mental illness in Africa. Will Dr. Mahiro, being the only mental practitioner around, be able to help Valerie? Will Chumba get better and will he ever live an ordinary life? And what about Kapaka who suffers from mental depression? Find out all this and more in the coming episodes of this radio drama. To listen to this program again or to any other episode, you can visit our webpage at dw.de/lbe. You can also follow us on Facebook. Until then, take care.