

LEARNING BY EAR 2012

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

EPISODE 4: "Wrong and right attitudes"

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List of characters by scene:

SCENE ONE: MALEMBA'S HUT SURROUNDED BY NEIGHBOURS

- **Man (m, 45)**
- **Mixed voices (3 to 4 persons, male + female, 30 +)**
- **Narrator**

SCENE TWO: KAPAKA CONTEMPLATES COMMITTING SUICIDE

- **Kapaka (m, 25)**
- **Cheupe (f, 25)**
- **Pastor (m, 40)**
- **Narrator**

SCENE THREE: VALERIE IN THE STREETS

- **Valerie (f, 19)**
- **Guard (m, 30)**
- **Narrator**

**SCENE FOUR: MALEMBA RETURNS HOME FROM COLLECTING
FIREWOOD**

- **Malemba (f, 35)**

- **Chumba (m,16)**

INTRO:

Hello and welcome to the fourth episode of our Learning by Ear radio novella. This story is entitled, "**I am still human**", and it's all about mental illness in Africa. In the last episode, Malemba had to take her son Chumba to Mizanja, the traditional doctor, after she was denied help at the local clinic due to Chumba's mental condition. And Valerie went to see the only psychiatrist in the country, Dr. Mahiro, who advised her to see him regularly. So what's coming up in today's episode? Let's find out. This episode is called "**Wrong and right attitudes**". We start off early in the morning at the village where Malemba's neighbours have surrounded her tiny little hut.

SCENE ONE: MALEMBA'S HUT SURROUNDED BY NEIGHBOURS

1. **ATMO:** **VILLAGE AMBIENCE AT DAWN**

2. **MAN:** **(shouting)** Malemba! You witch, come out! We are tired of you bewitching us. Today is the day!

3. **MIXED VOICES: SCREAMING AND YELLING "WE SHALL BURN YOU"**

4. **MAN:** Malemba, come out, or we are going to set your hut on fire! Do you hear us? We don't want to live with witches any more! Your time is up.

5. **MIXED VOICES: SHOUTING "burn the witch"**

6. **MAN:** This is your last chance. If you don't come out we are

going to set this place on fire. Okay, she thinks we are joking, give me the match box.

7. **SFX:** **MATCHBOX BEING LIT UP**

8. **MAN:** May you and your evil work burn in this fire! You have no place in this community, you have even sacrificed your own son to evil spirits and brought a curse to this village. We have had no rain, our animals are dying and our people are getting sick. What we are doing is ridding our land of evil!

9. **SFX:** **GRASS CATCHES FIRE AND STARTS TO BURN**

10. **MAN:** People, run, or the bad spirits will escape and enter you...

11. **SFX:** **PEOPLE SHOUTING AND YELLING AS THEY RUN AWAY, FADE IN BACKGROUND.**

12. NARRATOR: Malemba's grass-thatched hut catches fire instantly! And it spreads quickly, helped by the cool morning breeze. Within minutes the once tiny hut is razed to the ground. Were the neighbours right in carrying out such an atrocity? Only because they suspected Malemba of being a witch? Does having a mentally disabled person in your family mean that you are a witch?

Well, maybe the other question you are asking yourself, is: What happened to Chumba and Malemba, his caring mother? Have we seen the last of them? Don't worry, the answer is coming soon.

But now, let's turn our attention to Kapaka. After losing his job, he has also lost interest in everything else. The truth is that he is now suffering from clinical depression. But neither he nor his wife Cheupe are aware of that. So Cheupe brings home someone she believes can help.

SCENE TWO: KAPAKA CONTEMPLATES COMMITTING SUICIDE

13. KAPAKA: Useless, hopeless, helpless. That's what I have become. I am not a good husband, not a good partner, not a good friend, not a good neighbour. How can I be a good father? Impossible! What is the purpose of this life if you can't be what you want to be, if you can't have what you want to have?

14. SFX: PAPER BEING TORN FROM BOOK

15. KAPAKA: I have endured enough of this shame. I can't let my unborn child see me. I have disappointed the baby even before it is born. I am an embarrassment to my family, to my clan and to my people. Okay, I need to write this letter quickly before Cheupe comes back from church.

16. SFX: PEN SCRIBBLING ON PAPER

17. KAPAKA: **(takes a deep breath / reads as he writes)** Dear Cheupe, my lovely wife. I am sorry for the pain I will cause, but I decided to end my life because I stopped existing a long time ago. Please don't cry. Take care of our baby when you give birth. I am so sorry.
(stops writing, sudden anger) I hate this world! I hated my job as a cashier! Enough of this pretension! Time to deal with my failures.

KW begin

Arrrgh!! (bangs his head on the table several times)

18. SFX: HEAD BANGING ON WOOD SEVERAL TIMES

19. KAPAKA: Ah, my head hurts. I can't take this any more. Cheupe doesn't understand how I feel. No one does, no one cares. It's a cruel world. **(starts to cry)** Mama and Daddy, I will soon be joining you in your place of rest: Six feet under. Perhaps I will finally find relief from this torment and torture.

KW end

20. **SFX:** **DOOR BEING KNOCKED**
21. **KAPAKA:** **(faintly)** Leave me alone. I want to die in peace. Just go away. Leave me alone.
22. **CHEUPE:** **(from outside)** Kapaka! It's me, honey. I am home, and I brought someone with me from church. Open the door, I can't find my keys.
23. **KAPAKA:** Cheupe, I am sorry. I have written everything down. Everything will be okay. You will see.
24. **CHEUPE:** Pastor, do you see what I mean? I am telling you: Kapaka is no longer the man I used to know. What does he mean *everything is written down*?
25. **PASTOR:** Quick! Open the door, I'm afraid he is about to try killing himself!
26. **CHEUPE:** Oh my God! No. That can't be....where are my keys...
27. **SFX:** **SOMEONE FUMBLING WITH A HANDBAG**
28. **PASTOR:** We have no time... Sorry, but I have to break down your door.
29. **SFX:** **DOOR BEING KICKED OPEN**

- 30. SFX:** **TWO PERSONS STORMING IN**
- 31. PASTOR:** Where are you, Kapaka? Where are you?
- 32. CHEUPE:** **(breathing heavily)** He is...he is... sitting down there, beside the cupboard.
- 33. PASTOR:** Kapaka, please don't drink that. I am here to pray for you. Your wife told me everything.
- 34. CHEUPE:** **(going into labour)** Oh...pew! It's the baby! It's coming. Aaah....
- 35. PASTOR:** **(confused)** What!?! Now? Okay... where do we start?
- 36. CHEUPE:** **(screaming)** Aaaah...Kapakaaa...get up! Our baby needs you.
- 37. PASTOR:** **(panicking voice)** Yes! Kapaka, your wife needs you, your baby needs a father. Don't do this to them.
- 38. KAPAKA:** **(sudden change of mood)** Cheupe my wife! Are you okay? Oh goodness me. It's time! Where have I been? Alright, Pastor, let's take her to the hospital quickly. You came with your car, right?
- KW begin*
- 39. PASTOR:** Well, yes, but don't you think you should first take a shower? Change your clothes, it seems like you haven't showered for weeks.

40. CHEUPE: (more screams) Aaaah... fuuuu... (short breathing)
Please hurry up...hurry up...

41. PASTOR: Alright, let's go, everybody!

KW end

42. NARRATOR: Kapaka's unborn baby has just rescued his father. But many depressed people don't get that sort of chance. Depression can change or distort the way you see yourself, your life, and those around you. But many Africans still don't know the symptoms, causes or how to deal with it. As the three drive off to the hospital, students back at the nursing college are on a break. But Valerie is not among them. She has not returned to see Dr. Mahiro, and her situation has gotten worse. She has fled from college and is now living on the streets, roaming around and talking to herself and to strangers. But her words don't make any sense.

SCENE THREE: VALERIE IN THE STREETS

43. ATMO: **BUSY STREET AMBIENCE**

44. VALERIE: **(laughing)** I am the doctor... and you are the patient!
(laughs uncontrollably) Hey! **(calls to stranger)** Hey
you, yes, you are the patient! Come here... come to the
doctor. Hahahaha. What? **(talking to self)** Don't talk
back to me! Don't come near me!

45. NARRATOR: Like most other diseases, mental illness when left
untreated can quickly progress to something more
serious. Valerie, a young ambitious nursing student, is
now roaming the streets, almost half naked and faces
more stigma and abuse from people who know nothing
about her condition - like this guard at a shop where
Valerie is now seated.

KW begin

46. GUARD: You crazy mad lady! Get out of here - you are scaring
our customers. Get up!

47. VALERIE: **(laughing)**

48. GUARD: You are laughing at me? Do you think that is funny? I
am telling you to get out of here, or I will kick you out
myself!

Silence

49. VALERIE: **(more laughing)** You are the patient! I am the doctor!

KW end

50. GUARD: Alright! I have had enough of your stupid talk.

51. SFX: **SOMEONE BEING ROUGHED UP**

52. VALERIE: **(complaining)** Hmm... I will bite you!

53. GUARD: **(screams in pain)** Arrrrgh ...You silly mad maniac!

54. SFX: **HARD SLAP ON FACE**

55. VALERIE: **(begins to weep)**

56. GUARD: Don't ever come here again or else I will hit that crazy head of yours until you become normal!

57. NARRATOR: Unfortunately that is the kind of wrong attitude most people have towards mentally ill persons. To them, these people don't think, don't feel... they simply don't exist. Many stories have been told of how some mentally ill people have been abused, physically and even sexually. Valerie has just been subjected to abuse. Will that be the only case? As we leave the streets, let's head back to the village where Malemba's hut has been burned to the ground. As fate would have it, Malemba had gone to look for firewood in the forest when her hut was set on fire. Let's catch up with her as she is returning back home.

**SCENE FOUR: MALEMBA RETURNS HOME FROM COLLECTING
FIREWOOD**

- 58. SFX:** **EMBERS STILL BURNING**
- 59. MALEMBA:** **(singing a song, suddenly stopping)** Nooo!
Chumbaaaaa! My son!
- 60. SFX:** **BUNDLE OF FIREWOOD FALLS TO THE
GROUND**
- 61. SFX:** **MALEMBA RUNNING TOWARDS HER SON**
- 62. MALEMBA:** **(yelling)** Chumba! Oh thank God you are ok!
- 63. CHUMBA:** **(starts to scream)** Hot... hot... Mama... hot...
- 64. MALEMBA:** **(begins to cry)** I know, Chumba, it's okay now. Mama
is home... Mama is home. I know my boy... It's going
to be okay. Mama is now home and will never leave
you again.

OUTRO:

Fortunately, Chumba was in his small hut next to Malemba's when the fire broke out, and he got out just in time before the flames could spread. Malemba holds her son Chumba tightly, as painful tears drip down her cheeks. She is home, but there is no home. Her hut has been reduced to ashes. But just now, she doesn't care: In her arms she is holding what matters most to her: Her son Chumba. Malemba has the right attitude towards her mentally ill son. And that brings us to the end of this fourth episode. What will happen to Malemba and Chumba now? Will Valerie find any help in the streets? And how will Kapaka cope with his depression after taking his wife to the hospital to deliver their baby? All this and more in the coming episode. If you wish to listen to this episode again, please visit our website at dw.de/lbe. You can also follow us on Facebook and let us know how people in your country treat those with mental illnesses. Until then, goodbye.