

Learning by Ear 2013

Crossroads Generation - Facing Tough Choices

EPISODE FIVE: Love Letters and Tears

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List of characters by scene:

SCENE 1: MORNING AT MSOTO'S HOME

- **MERCY (F, 15)**
- **LULU (F, 40)**

SCENE 2: NIKI WRITES A LOVE LETTER TO MERCY

- **NIKI (M, 16)**
- **MRS. JUMBE (F, 35)**

SCENE 3: HISTORY LESSON IN MERCY'S CLASSROOM

- **GROUP OF STUDENTS (M/F, 15/16)**
- **JULIETTE (F, 50)**
- **MERCY (F, 15)**
- **TRUDY (F, 15)**
- **DAN (M, 16)**
- **NIKI (F, 16)**

SCENE 4: LULU GIVES BIRTH TO HER BABY AT HOME

- **LULU (F, 40)**
- **MSOTO (M, 45)**
- **SEDA (F, 65)**

1. INTRO - NARRATOR:

Welcome to "Crossroads Generation", a new Learning by Ear story about the challenges facing young African teenagers. This radio novella portrays the everyday life of Mercy, Niki and Dan. They're all students at a posh high school called Bongo Academy, but life is difficult for all of them, in different ways. Let's look back at what's happened so far:

Mercy is from a poor family. Winning a scholarship was her ticket to Bongo Academy. Her first lesson at the new school is how it feels to be the object of desire – for two boys at once. Because both Niki *and* Dan are chasing after her!

2. DAN (EP 04, 58 & 68): "Excuse me. Mercy, can I talk to you?... (...) May I walk you back to class, Mercy?"

3. NIKI (69): "Well, as the class prefect, I think it would be better if I took her back. She's obviously not interested in your offer..."

4. MERCY: "Thanks, both of you. But I think I can find my own way."

What Mercy does not know is that, back at home, her father has come up with a cruel plan. Mercy's mother is pregnant again, and he's had a terrible idea:

5. MSOTO (EP 04, 37): "Hmmm... I hate to say it, but I think it's better if we give the baby away." **(KW BEGIN)**

6. LULU: "No! No, no, no, no, no way! Msoto, you can't do that! I won't allow it!"

7. MSOTO: "Shut up, you useless woman! **(Slap on the face)** [...] I am the man of this house! I decide! I make the rules and you obey them!" **(KW END)**

"Love Letters and Tears" is the title of this fifth episode. Lean back and let us take you to Mercy's home, in the Tandika slums. We pick up the story the next morning when, as fate would have it, Lulu, Mercy's mother, is about to go into labour.

SCENE 1: MORNING AT MSOTO'S HOME

8. SFX: MORNING ATMO IN SLUM SETTLEMENT

9. MERCY: Mum, I've never seen you so sad! What's going on?

10. LULU: Sad? Me? No. I'm not sad. I'm... I'm just tired. You know - the pregnancy.

11. MERCY: Did you and Daddy have another fight?

12. LULU: No! Where did you get that idea? No, your father and I are absolutely fine.

13. MERCY: Is it something to do with my twin brothers, Kadu and Banda?

14. LULU: Mercy, stop asking so many questions. Your brothers are okay.

15. MERCY: Are they really? How do you know, Mum? When was the last time you talked to them? I know I haven't heard from them since they left for Laboria with Aunty Lena.

16. LULU: **(complaining of pain)** Aaah... uuuh... mmmmh..

17. MERCY: **(in panic)** Mum, is the baby coming? What shall I do? Should I go and call Dad from work? Or maybe Seda the midwife? She lives nearby.

KW BEGIN

18. LULU: **(breathing slowly)** No, don't call them yet. It might be a false alarm. I don't want your father to leave his job now, only to come home and find it's nothing. Besides, he'll soon be finishing his night shift.

19. MERCY: But Mum, you don't look too good. I mean, you don't sound too good. And I can't go to school and leave you here by yourself! What if the baby does decide to come now?

20. LULU: **(catching her breath from time to time)** Mercy, don't worry. I've given birth three times already. I'm sure I can handle this. Get ready and go to school.

21. MERCY: Are you sure, Mum? I can pass by Seda's house on my way to school and ask her to stop by.

KW END

22. LULU: **(panting)** All right Mercy, you do that. But go now or you'll be late for school. Do you have enough money for lunch?

23. MERCY: I've been saving. So I do have some money left. At least for another few days.

24. LULU: Clever girl. Go and have a good day.

25. MERCY: You have a good day, too. And I hope it is what you say... a false alarm.

26. SFX DOOR OPENING

27. MUSIC INTERLUDE

SCENE 2: NIKI WRITES A LOVE LETTER TO MERCY

28. SFX: PEN SCRIBBLING ON PAPER

29. NIKI: (reading out loud while writing) "Dear Mercy. I am writing to inform you that ..." (cuts himself off, frustrated) Ah! This sounds like a letter to the president, not a love letter!

30. SFX: PAPER BEING CRUMPLED UP AND THROWN

31. NIKI: (excited) I know! Oh, why didn't I think of this before? The Internet – that's where I'll find all the right words. I'm sure there must be plenty of sample love letters I could use!

32. SFX: COMPUTER BEING TURNED ON

33. NIKI: Mercy, you're going to be mine. I can't and won't let that idiot Dan spoil my chances. Oh no! I'm running out of time... Come on! This computer is so slow... Hurry up!

34. SFX: GENTLE KNOCK ON DOOR

35. MRS. JUMBE: Niki, are you ready for school?

36. NIKI: Mum, just give me a few minutes...

37. SFX: DOOR OPENING

38. NIKI: (very angry) Oh, come on, Mum! I said a few minutes. Why do you still treat me like a little boy?

39. MRS. JUMBE: (shocked) Oh, my goodness! Niki, what have you been doing? Why are all those papers on the floor? What are you looking at on your computer?

- 40. NIKI:** **(defensive)** Nothing! Mum, you're trespassing! This is private territory. Besides... I... I was just trying to learn a few things on the Internet.
- 41. MRS.JUMBE:** If that's the case, why are you hiding the computer screen? Let me see what you were doing on there!
- 42. SFX: COMPUTER SHUT DOWN WITH LOGGING OUT TONE**
- 43. NIKI:** **(still defensive)** This is MY computer. I can do whatever I want on it. I'm 16 years old! In two years' time I'll be an adult.
- 44. MRS.JUMBE:** Is that so? Well, I think it's high time you and your Daddy had a chat. Don't you think?
- 45. NIKI:** No! I think it's high time you stopped spying on me! Just... respect my privacy!
- 46. MRS.JUMBE:** **(calming him down)** Okay, okay, Mr. 'Big Boy'. I'm leaving, but this isn't over, you know. And make sure you tidy up your room. Goodness - I can't even find oxygen to breathe in here. We need to leave in five minutes! Five minutes, Niki! If we get caught in traffic and you're late for school, it'll be your fault!
- 47. SFX: DOOR CLOSSES. FOOTSTEPS WALK AWAY AND FADE**

48. NIKI: **(Thinking aloud)** Okay... All is not lost. Plan B: No Internet assistance, just write my pure feelings and emotions. Yes, that should do it. But in five minutes? Hmm... well, let's see.

49. SFX: PEN SCRIBBLING ON PAPER

50. NIKI: **(reading while writing)** "My dear Mercy. Where do I begin? I have been searching for the right words to express how I feel."

51. ROMANTIC MUSIC INTERLUDE

SCENE 3: HISTORY LESSON IN MERCY'S CLASSROOM

52. SFX: TEXT BOOK PAGES BEING OPENED AT RANDOM

**53. ATMO CLASS ROOM (PEOPLE SITTING QUIETLY IN A ROOM;
SOME CHATTING; PAPER RUSTLING)**

KW BEGIN

54. JULIETTE: So as I said, I - Principal Juliette - will be your biology teacher. And before we start on this week's topic, I always tell my students that I like to be challenged. Knowledge is very interesting, because the same thing can mean different things to different people. So. Evolution. What do you think about evolution? Yes, Dan. Go ahead.

55. DAN: It's the idea that we all used to have tails, and they simply disappeared over time.

56. SFX: HUGE LAUGHTER FROM CLASS

57. JULIETTE: All right. Well, guess what? Dan’s right. Or at least half right.

But we’ll come to that later. Anyone else? What comes to your mind when you hear the word evolution? Mercy...?

58. MERCY: It’s the idea of how life started on Earth.

59. JULIETTE: Excellent! Evolution, in a nutshell, is the scientific theory of how life began on Earth. A scientist named Charles Darwin came up with the evolution theory. He discovered that living things, humans included, had been changing over millions of generations into what we see today.

60. MERCY: But what about creation? In religion we’re taught that God created everything on Earth. So who should we believe?

61. JULIETTE: Good question, Mercy. Who should we believe? The theories of Evolution and Creation have clashed for centuries. Well, the truth is that you have to work out for yourself what you believe in. Nobody can decide that for you! Nowadays, many people even think the two theories aren't mutually exclusive and that in Evolution one may recognize the resourcefulness of the Creator. But when it comes to your class work, you need to be familiar with both theories. All right? **(short pause, KW END)** Okay, everybody open your books, please! I'm going to give you a few minutes to read about Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. When I come back I'll have some questions for you, so you'd better read it carefully!

62. SFX: JULIETTE'S HIGH HEELS WALKING TO THE DOOR

KW END

63. TRUDY: **(whispering in excitement)** Mercy! Mercy, here - I have something for you.

64. MERCY: What is it, Trudy? I need to concentrate.

65. TRUDY: You won't believe this, if it is what I think it is.

66. MERCY: Okay. Quick. What is it? We don't want Niki to report us to the Principal for being noisy.

67. TRUDY: I doubt that he'll report *you*...

68. MERCY: Trudy, what are you trying to tell me?

69. TRUDY: Take this and hide it for now until we can go to the toilet later on. Then we can open it there.

70. SFX: ENVELOPE BEING HANDED OVER

71. MERCY: What is this? A letter? From whom?

72. TRUDY: It's not just a letter, my friend. I think it's a *love* letter!

73. MERCY: A *love* letter?

74. TRUDY: Sssh, not so loud. Yes, I think so.

75. MERCY: Who from?

76. TRUDY: We-e-e-ll... That's the best part. Niki gave me the letter in secret this morning. Says I should give it to you, and you only.

77. MERCY: I'll read it later.

78. TRUDY: Oh, oh - I think we have a bigger problem. Dan's coming over to your desk.

79. SFX: DAN'S FOOTSTEPS

80. DAN: (**overly cool**) Hi, Mercy. I've got something for you. I know this isn't the right time, but I couldn't wait. Here – please, take this and look at it when you have a minute. Hope you like it.

81. SFX: ENVELOPE HANDED OVER

82. **NIKI:** **(shouting)** Dan, can you go and sit down at your desk! I’m not putting up with this anymore.
83. **DAN:** **(sarcastic)** Sure thing, boss. Can I get you something else to drink?
84. **SFX: STUDENTS LAUGH UNDER THEIR BREATH**
85. **TRUDY:** Mercy, girl! That’s a beautiful problem you’ve got there. *Two* love letters, from the two handsomest boys in class. Aren’t you lucky? **(sighs)** I wish I was in your shoes.
86. **MERCY:** **(sighs too)** I wish I wasn’t.
87. **SFX: MUSIC INTERLUDE**

SCENE 4: LULU GIVES BIRTH TO HER BABY AT HOME

88. **SFX: SLUMDWELL AMBIENCE**
89. **LULU:** **(in intense labour pains)** Arrrgh! Uh Uh Uh... Arrrgh!
90. **SEDA:** **(encouraging)** Lulu, I’m right here! Just keep pushing! You’re doing great. Msoto’s here, too. He’s waiting outside. So be brave and all will be well... Just keep pushing!
91. **LULU:** **(catching breath)** Whoaaa! Msotooooo... Noooo...I can’t... Arrrgh!
92. **SFX: SOUND AND CRY OF AN INFANT, CRIES CONTINUE IN BACKGROUND**

93. SFX: BLANKETS BEING WRAPPED AROUND BABY

94. LULU: (sighing heavily from relief)

95. SEDA: (excited) Lulu, it's a beautiful baby girl! I just need to cut the umbilical cord before I give you the baby so you can breastfeed her.

96. SFX: SCISSORS SNAPPING ON SOMETHING. CLEANING OF FLOOR WITH RAG

97. SEDA: Congratulations, Lulu! Here's your baby! I think now we can ask the father to come in and share your joy.

98. SFX: TENSE MUSIC

99. SFX: BABY SUCKING BREAST MILK

100.LULU: (begging in tears) No, please don't bring in Msoto! Please Seda - don't do that. Not yet.

101.SEDA: (tries to calm Lulu) Hush, Lulu... You've lost a lot of energy. And a lot of blood. You need to rest and eat well. You'll be fine. (calls out) Msoto! Msoto! Come and meet your little princess! I'll leave now, and come back and see you as soon as I get the chance.

102.SFX: IRON SHEET DOOR BEING OPENED

103.SFX: FOOTSTEPS APPROACHING

104.SEDA: Congratulations, Msoto! It's a girl. I have to leave now. Goodbye. Take good care of Lulu and the baby!

105.SFX: IRON SHEET DOOR BEING CLOSED

106.MSOTO: (slow but strong threatening voice) Lulu, give me that baby...

107. LULU: Please don't do this. The baby needs to be fed first. Give me some time. Please, a day or two... I beg you.

108.MSOTO: I'm sorry, but I have to take it NOW! We don't have a choice.

109.SFX: BABY CRYING AS THERE IS A LITTLE FIGHT TO TAKE HER

110.LULU: (crying uncontrollably)

111.MSOTO: Listen to me carefully. If Seda or anyone else asks you what happened to the baby, tell them it died a few minutes after you gave birth. If you make a mistake and tell them what I'm about to do... I promise you will regret it!

112.MUSIC INTERLUDE

113.OUTRO/MODERATOR:

Can you believe what just happened? Msoto wants to give away his own child! What about Lulu? How will she deal with this? Mercy too is facing another crossroads, after receiving one love letter from Dan, and another one from Niki. If you want to know what Dan's plan is, you can follow his video blog at dw.de/lbe. You can also share your ideas and comments with us on Facebook. For now, though - goodbye.