

Learning by Ear 2013

Crossroads Generation - Facing Tough Choices

EPISODE EIGHT: Welcome to Womanhood

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List of characters by scene:

SCENE 1: MSOTO MOVES WITH HIS FAMILY TO A BETTER HOUSE

- MSOTO (M, 45)
- MERCY (F, 15)

SCENE 2: DAN KANYAMA SKYPES WITH HIS FATHER IN LABORIA

- DAN (M, 16)
- KANYAMA (M, 55)

SCENE 3: MERCY GETS HER FIRST PERIOD IN CLASS

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

1. INTRO - NARRATOR:

Hello and welcome to "Crossroads Generation", the new Learning by Ear radio drama about three teenagers trying to figure out what is the best path in life. Let's hear what's happened previously.

Dan is completely new to this country. His father owns a mining enterprise in neighbouring Laboria, and he decided to send the heir to his company to Bongo Academy in Kisimba because the school has an excellent reputation.

2. KANYAMA (EP 04, 101): "Dan, you're the one who will take over the business when I'm gone. So you'd better start thinking and acting responsibly."

3. DAN: "But Dad, we've been through this a thousand times! I'm not interested in the mining business."

Especially not since he met Mercy, a clever and pretty girl from his class. Too bad that he's not her only admirer. Niki, another classmate, is after her, too:

4. PEN SCRIBBLING ON PAPER

5. NIKI (EP 05, 50): "My dear Mercy. Where do I begin?... I've been searching for the words to express how I feel."

But Mercy has other things on her mind right now. When she came home from school the other day, she found her mother, Lulu, exhausted and bleeding on the floor. Lulu had just given birth, and she told Mercy that the child, a girl, had died. But this wasn't true. What actually happened was that Mercy's dad, Msoto, took the baby and sold it to Mr. Mukaraba, one of the wealthiest men in town. Mukaraba has now adopted her illegally. So let's see how the story continues in this eighth episode, "Welcome to Womanhood".

We're at home with Mercy and her father Msoto in their house in the Tandika slums. Both of them are packing boxes...

SCENE 1: MSOTO MOVES WITH HIS FAMILY TO A BETTER HOUSE

6. SLUM ATMO - INTERIOR

7. SFX: KITCHEN UTENSILS BEING PACKED INTO A BOX

8. MSOTO: Mercy, be careful with those bowls. Pack them nicely.

9. MERCY: Father, where are we moving to? You haven't said a word about it.

10. MSOTO: It's a surprise! And don't tell your mother yet. I want to take her straight from the hospital to the new house. Okay? Trust me - it's a better place than here.

11. MERCY: Okay, I trust you.

12. MSOTO: You're looking pale today. Are you all right?

13. MERCY: I feel strange, I don't know... like my stomach is bloated or something. I'm sorry if I'm being too slow with the packing.

14. SFX: KITCHEN UTENSILS BEING PACKED INTO A BOX

KW BEGIN

15. MERCY: Dad... I was just thinking... I'd like to see where you buried my little baby sister. I'd like to see her grave.

16. MSOTO: (angry) What for? Huh? You see the grave - then what?
Will that bring her back to life?

17. MERCY: I just thought it would be nice to go and pay her my last respects.

18. MSOTO: Last respects? She wasn't a head of state. She died before she even opened her eyes. Just let her rest in peace, can't you?

19. MERCY: (agrees) You're right. I should let it rest. Let my sister's soul rest in peace.

20. MSOTO: Now let's take the things outside. Transport is waiting.

21. MERCY: (reacts to pain) Ohhh... Let me rest for a minute. My tummy is hurting.

KW END

22. MSOTO: Maybe there was something wrong with your lunch.

23. MERCY: Yeah, maybe. I don't know. It feels strange somehow. I just hope it gets better by tomorrow morning. I can't afford to miss school.

24. MSOTO: And your mother will need all the help she can get when she's discharged from hospital tomorrow! Let me carry those chairs, then. You bring the small boxes outside.

25. SFX: MSOTO ACTS CARRYING HEAVY STUFF

26. MUSIC INTERLUDE

SCENE TWO: DAN KANYAMA SKYPES WITH FATHER LIVING IN LABORIA

27. DORMITORY ATMO, FAINT TRAFFIC NOISE FROM OUTSIDE

28. SFX: INTERNET CALL RINGING

29. DAN: Hello... Dad, can you hear me?

30. KANYAMA: Yes, Dan. How are you?

31. DAN: I'm fine, but broke. Is everything all right back home?

KW BEGIN

32. KANYAMA: Not at the moment. But not to worry. Papa's in control of the situation.

33. DAN: How's Mum?

34. KANYAMA: She's fine. She's worrying a lot about how you're getting on in the new environment. You know her... Anyway, you owe me a virtual tour of your room, don't you?

35. DAN: I was hoping you'd forget that. Okay then, I'm ready. Just let me turn on my webcam.

36. SFX: MOUSE CLICK

37. DAN: Can you see me now?

38. KANYAMA: **(pleased)** Oh, there's my Danny. Hey, you've lost weight! Are you eating enough?

39. DAN: (ignoring his father’s comment) This is my room. There’s my bed, I have a bookshelf over there, and the bathroom’s in the corner. The reading table and chair are where I’m sitting. That door over there separates me from Biko’s room. He’s a good mate - I think we’re going to be great friends. There you are - that’s it.

40. KANYAMA: That’s it?! It looks a dungeon to me! You mean I’m paying all that money for this kind of accommodation? Dan, you know, if you’d rather, I could transfer you to a school in Europe.

41. DAN: (rejecting strongly) No, no, no, Dad! I don’t want to go anywhere else. I like it here. It’s a good school.

42. KANYAMA: Hmm... You sound as if you’ve fallen in love.

43. DAN: Who? Me? No! What do you mean? I... I...

44. KANYAMA: I mean fallen in love with the country! Anyway, just remember that here is where your country is, and that your country needs you.

45. DAN: Yes, I know. Dad... you need to bail me out... I don't have a single cent left.

KW END

46. KANYAMA: Dan! You’re going to drive me to bankruptcy. You have to learn how to economize, so this is absolutely the last payment you’ll get this year. Understood? I’ll transfer you some money tomorrow.

47. DAN: Thank you, Dad. Really. I need to go to my afternoon classes now but... **(affectionately)** Aah, I miss home so much.

48. KANYAMA: **(affectionately)** Dan, home misses you, too. Okay - I need to go, too. Don't worry. I'll call you as soon as I've sent the cash. Bye now.

49. SFX: INTERNET CALL DISCONNECTED

50. MUSIC INTERLUDE

SCENE 3: MERCY GETS HER FIRST PERIOD IN CLASS

51. SFX: CLASSROOM AMBIENCE

52. NIKI: **(shouts out loud)** Silence, everyone! The principal will be here any minute for the History lesson.

53. SFX: STEPS DAN COMES IN

54. NIKI: You're late, Dan.

55. DAN: (arrogantly) Oh, Niki. You don't miss any opportunity to be the centre of attention, do you? So what? The principal will come and go. And so will you, Niki. You won't be class prefect forever, you know.

56. SFX: CLASS REACTS WITH "AH'S" AND "OH'S"

57. NIKI: That's it, Dan! I've had enough of your stupid comments and bad attitude. I'm going to report you to the principal after the lesson.

58. DAN: Report me, then – who cares? That's nothing. Why don't you report me to the school's board of directors? Or better still, why don't you report me to your father?

59. NIKI: (furious) Now you've crossed the line! We'll settle this here and now, like real men!

60. DAN: Bring it on! I've just been waiting for the opportunity.

61. SFX: DESKS AND CHAIRS BEING PULLED ASIDE / FIGHT BETWEEN BOYS

62. TRUDY: (frantic) Mercy! Come on, aren't you going to stop your boys from fighting?

63. MERCY: (gently) Dan and Niki! Will you two start acting your age? (suddenly shrieks with stomach pain) Ah, my tummy! It really hurts! Trudy, help me ... aargh!

64. SFX: DESKS MOVING AS NIKI AND DAN FIGHT

65. TRUDY: Mercy, are you okay? Come on, sit down.

66. SFX: CHAIR BEING PULLED

67. MERCY: I don't know what's wrong with me. I've got such a tummy ache this morning! But it's not like an ordinary stomach upset...

68. TRUDY: Maybe it's your monthly period?

69. MERCY: My what? Ah, you mean like the menstrual cycle?

70. TRUDY: Yes! I got mine already when I was twelve! Come on, Mercy, I'll take you to the bathroom.

71. SFX: FOOTSTEPS LEAVING

72. CROSSFADE BATHROOM: ECHOEY SOUND

73. SFX: TOILET CUBICLE DOOR CLOSING

74. SFX: CLOTH RUSTLE

75. MERCY: **(behind the door)** Trudy! I'm bleeding!

76. TRUDY: See, it's your period. Congratulations, Mercy. You're a woman now! **(chuckles)**

77. MERCY: But what do I about it?

78. SFX: TRUDY RUMMAGING AROUND IN HER BAG

79. TRUDY: I have a sanitary pad for you, wait! **(short pause)** Here! Just put it in your panties.

80. MERCY: Oh, thank you!

81. SFX: CLOTH RUSTLE

82. SFX: BATHROOM DOOR OPENED FORCEFULLY

83. PRINCIPAL JULIETTE: Trudy! There you are! Where’s Mercy?

84. TOILET CUBICLE DOOR OPENS

85. MERCY: (coming out of the toilet) Here.

86. JULIETTE: Why aren't you in class? Nobody knew where you two had gone!

87. TRUDY: Sorry, Madam Juliette. But Mercy just got her period.

88. JULIETTE: Mercy, is that true?

89. MERCY: (ashamed) Mmh.

90. JULIETTE: (reassuring) Oh, Mercy. There’s no need to be ashamed! Welcome to womanhood. You know what this means now, right? It means you can conceive and carry a baby in your womb. How do you feel?

91. MERCY: Better now. Thank you, Madam.

92. JULIETTE: Don’t mention it. We women have to be there for each other. But tell me, Mercy, do you understand why this happens?

93. MERCY: I think so... well, I’m not quite sure....

94. JULIETTE: You’re having what’s called the “menarche”. This is a girl’s first period. From now on, you will have a menstrual cycle, so once a month you’ll need to be prepared.

- 95. MERCY:** Really? Every month? And how long will it last?
- 96. JULIETTE:** That's hard to tell. Each woman has her own individual cycle. The period usually lasts between three and seven days. You may miss a period here and there in the beginning, but as long as you haven't engaged in sex, you don't need to worry. It's just your body trying to cope with all the changes. But the most important thing is that you need to protect yourself. Do you understand?
- 97. MERCY:** Yes, I'll get some of these sanitary pads...
- 98. JULIETTE:** That's not what I mean! I'm talking about sex, Mercy. You can conceive now, which means you must use contraceptives. As long as you're not having sex you don't need to worry. But if you do, you risk becoming pregnant.
- 99. MERCY:** What about all these pains, the stomach cramps and headaches?

- 100. JULIETTE:** Well, these are some of the symptoms that will accompany your periods. Cramps are among the most common. If it gets really bad you can always take a painkiller. Don't worry – it's very natural, and believe me, Nature knows best how to care for itself. You may also notice that you feel tense, angry, or sad around the time of your period. But don't worry - the symptoms won't last long.
- 101. MERCY:** Thanks, Madam Juliette. I wish my mum had prepared me better for this.
- 102. JULIETTE:** Don't blame your mum. My mother never told me about this, either. But I think it'd be better if you went home today. I think you need a bit of time to take it all in, don't you. But if you have any questions, don't hesitate to come and see me. Okay?
- 103. MERCY:** I will.
- 104. JULIETTE:** Right then, Trudy, let's go back to class. **(ironically)** I'm sure you and your classmates can't wait for the lesson to continue...
- 105. TRUDY:** **(lethargic)** Yes, Madam.

106. OUTRO/MODERATOR:

That wraps up this eighth episode of "Crossroads Generation", a DW Learning by Ear production. Now that Mercy has entered womanhood, how will she handle the physical and emotional changes that come with it? We'll find out in the coming episodes. If you want to listen to this or any of the previous episodes again, or if you want to download them for free, just visit our website at dw.de/lbe. You can also follow us on Facebook. Until we meet again, take care and goodbye.