

Learning by Ear 2013

**"Crossroads Generation - Facing Tough Choices"**

EPISODE SEVENTEEN: Playing with Fire

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**1. INTRO - NARRATOR:**

Hello and thanks for tuning in to another episode of "Crossroads Generation", a Learning by Ear production brought to you by DW. In this radio novella we're following Mercy, Niki and Dan, three teenagers from Bongo High school Academy who have to face tough challenges every day. Let's catch up...

Niki has had a lot to deal with recently. He came home to find his mother had been tied up by robbers who broke into the house and stole a lot of valuables. The police still have no clues as to who was behind the mugging. Meanwhile, Niki is struggling with his feelings for Mercy. Their last meeting didn't go well for him:

**2. MERCY (EP 12, 20):** "Niki, I have to tell you something."

**3. NIKI:** (...) "I'm listening with my ears, my heart, everything."

**4. MERCY:** "Niki, I.. I.. I think I like..."

**5. NIKI:** "I like you, too, Mercy!"

**6. MERCY:** "I think I like Dan. I'm sorry, Niki."

So Mercy has finally decided on Dan, her classmate from the neighbouring country of Laboria, who's been chatting her up for some time. But when she confessed her feelings to him, Dan pushed her to prove them. He invited her to visit him in his room, but their date was rudely interrupted:

**7. ROMANTIC MUSIC**

**8. DAN (EPISODE 16, 78):** "Mercy, come and sit down beside me.

You've been standing the whole time. Here - take my hand."

**9. (LINE 83) SFX: RAPID KNOCKING ON DOOR**

**10. BIKO (86):** "It's Biko! Red alert! Red alert!"

**11. MERCY (87):** "Red alert? What's that supposed to mean?"

**12. DAN (88):** "Red alert is our way of saying the Principal's on her way.

Quick, we have to get you out of here!"

Biko was warning them that the principal was coming to do one of her regular room inspections. But did Dan and Mercy manage to leave the room before the principal caught them? Let's find out in the seventeenth episode, “Playing with Fire”.

**SCENE ONE: DAN SNEAKS MERCY OUT OF BOYS DORMITORY  
COMPOUND**

13. **SFX: SCHOOL COMPOUND OUTSIDE**

14. **SFX: RUSTLING OF BUSHES**

15. **DAN:** (in a hushed tone) I'm really sorry, Mercy. I didn't intend our meeting to end like this.

16. **MERCY:** It's okay, I understand. (concerned) But isn't it dangerous to hide here in the bushes? We might get bitten by a snake...

17. **SFX: RUSTLING OF BUSHES**

18. **DAN:** Hey, stop imagining the worst. Listen: as soon as this is over, Biko will shout from the window and give us a signal. Then we can go back to my room and pick up where we left off.

19. **MERCY:** (shocked) Dan! No way! I'm not going back there again! We're lucky Principal Juliette didn't find me in your room! I just want to go home. My Dad will be wondering why I'm so late!

20. **DAN:** (thinking hard) But Mercy, you didn't even spend any time with me.

21. **MERCY:** How can you say that? I’m spending time with you right now!

22. **DAN:** Yes, but... er... you know... I mean, *quality* time. I’d planned for us to have --

**KW BEGIN**

23. **MERCY:** **(interrupts him)** To have what, Dan? Hmm?

24. **DAN:** To have some fun in each other's company. **(gets an idea)** You know what? Nobody can see us here. We’re well hidden in this bush. **(flirty voice)** So... how about getting a little closer, Mercy?

**KW END**

25. **MERCY:** Dan... I can't. I’m sorry, but I can't do that. I’m not ready yet. It's too risky. Please - let's wait.

26. **DAN:** Wait for what? This is the moment. This is the time! We may never have an opportunity like this again.

27. **MERCY:** We should wait until we’re both more mature. I think it's better to wait until after marriage. I’ve never done this before, and I want to save myself for the person I marry.

28. **DAN:** **(acting emotionally hurt)** So you don't really feel anything for me at all. It was all lies. Fine, I get it now. I thought you actually liked me...
29. **MERCY:** **(confused)** Dan, you're making this very difficult for me. I do like you and you know it. But I really think we should wait!
30. **DAN:** **(still acting hurt, putting her under pressure)** Don't lie to me, Mercy. You don't like me. If you *did*, you wouldn't mind *showing* me some affection.
31. **BIKO:** **(loud whistle from window, loud whisper)** Hey! The coast is clear! Green alert! Don't worry, man, I'll cover for you.
32. **DAN:** **(cold)** So. The coast is clear. Here. I'll hold the wire mesh up. Be careful! Once you're out, you'll find yourself not just out of the boys' compound but out of the school compound as well. And out of my life, too. **(bitterly)** Goodbye, Mercy.
33. **MERCY:** **(starts to cry)** But... Dan... Please! I told you...
34. **SFX: WIRE MESH BEING PULLED UP**
35. **DAN:** **(struggling to hold wire up)** I can't hold this up much longer, Mercy.

**36. MERCY:** (sobs) Bye, Dan.

**37. SFX:** MERCY PASSING THROUGH SMALL GAP IN WIRE MESHED FENCE WHILE SOBBING

**38. MUSIC INTERLUDE**

### **SCENE TWO: PRINCIPAL JULIETTE IN DAN'S ROOM**

**39. SFX:** HIGH-HEELED FOOTSTEPS IN DORM CORRIDOR

**40. SFX:** LOUD KNOCK ON DOOR

**41. BIKO:** (responds from inside, pretending not to know who's behind the door) Dan? Are you back from the library already?

**42. SFX:** DOOR OPENS WITH CREAKING SOUND

**43. JULIETTE:** (coldly polite) Hello, Biko.

**44. BIKO:** (plays surprised) Oh! Principal Juliette! What a surprise! Good afternoon. Sorry, I wasn't expecting you at all! I thought it was Dan.

**45. JULIETTE:** Good afternoon to you, Biko. What's wrong with this door? It needs oiling! And why are you in Dan's room? Where is Dan Kanyama?

**46. BIKO:** (well-mannered) Dan went to the library, Madam Juliette. He wanted to study.

**47. JULIETTE:** (firmly) He wanted to study? (joking) Miracles do still happen in this school, then. Biko, I’m here for the routine check on your rooms. As Dan’s not here, of course I can’t check his belongings. But please accompany me to your room.

**48. BIKO:** (scared) Erm... yes... of course. But I just have to warn you that my room’s not in the best condition at the moment. Maybe you could give me a few minutes to tidy it up?

**49. JULIETTE:** (firmly) No! That’s why they’re called random checks! Let’s go to your room, Biko. I want to see what you’ve been up to.

**50. SFX: HIGH-HEELED FOOTSTEPS WALKING, BIKO WALKING ALONGSIDE**

**KW BEGIN**

**51. SFX: ANOTHER DOOR IS OPENED**

**52. JULIETTE:** (not so amused) Okay, I’ll pretend I can’t see all the dirty clothes on the floor.



**53. BIKO:** Of course, Madam. I’m sorry. I was planning on doing some laundry.

**54. JULIETTE:** I want you to empty all the rest of your belongings out of the suitcase and onto the bed.

**55. SFX: PERSONAL BELONGINGS BEING EMPTIED ONTO BED**

**56. JULIETTE:** And now, please step aside. (**rummaging through things**) Okay, nothing unusual here. I see you've been abiding by the rules.

**57. BIKO:** Yes, Madam.

**58. JULIETTE:** But Biko, look around! Do you really feel comfortable living in such a mess? You need to tidy up your room. And let me know when Dan comes back from the library. I trust you two haven’t been doing anything naughty. Am I right?

**59. BIKO:** (**scared**) No... I mean yes! Yes, you’re right, Madam Juliette.

**60. JULIETTE:** Good. Then keep it up!

**KW END**

**61. SFX: HIGH-HEELED FOOTSTEPS LEAVING**

**62. MUSIC INTERLUDE**

**SCENE THREE: MERCY ARRIVES HOME**

**63. ATMO AT MERCY'S HOME LATE EVENING**

**64. SFX: DOOR SLOWLY OPENING**

**65. MSOTO:** (**furious**) Mercy! Why on earth are you so late home, eh? Where've you been all this time?

**66. MERCY:** (**politely**) Hi Dad! I'm so sorry for coming home an hour late...

**67. MSOTO:** (**angry**) I asked you a question. Where have you been?

**68. MERCY:** I was at the library with Trudy. We were studying for the exams.

**69. MSOTO:** (**threatening**) And you are sure that if I ask this Trudy she'll confirm you were with her?

**70. MERCY:** Of course. Dad, please, believe me! Let me make you something to eat.

**71. MSOTO:** (**angry**) There's nothing here to cook! Mercy, don't ever come home late again. Do you hear me?

**72. MERCY:** Yes Dad. I'm sorry... But Dad...? I'd really like to go and visit Mum at my grandparents'.

**73. MSOTO:** Why? Aren't you happy with me?

74. **MERCY:** No, no, no. It's not that I'm not happy. But I miss her presence here. And I'd like to talk to her.
75. **MSOTO:** About what? Go on! I'm listening.
76. **MERCY:** About my future.
77. **MSOTO:** And you think your mother is the one who's best suited to talk to you about your future? Not me?
78. **MERCY:** Oh, Dad. Why does it always have to be like this? Why do you make us choose between you and Mum?
79. **MSOTO:** Fine. Go to your mother. But you're not going to sleep there. I don't want her poisoning your mind. And whatever she tells you, I want you to tell me. Is that clear?
80. **MERCY:** Yes. I understand.
81. **MSOTO:** And while you're there, I want you to observe her closely and tell me whether she's happy or not.
82. **MERCY:** (**politely**) Of course. But Dad... can I get money for lunch, and the bus fare to school for next week?
83. **MSOTO:** I don't have any money.
84. **MERCY:** What am I supposed to do, then? We've got an exam on Monday. I can't miss school.

85. **MSOTO:** You have legs, don't you?
86. **MERCY:** What about food? What do I do about food?
87. **MSOTO:** I'm asking myself the same question. When I get an answer I will tell you, Mercy.
88. **MUSIC TRANSITION**

#### **SCENE FOUR: NIKI STEALS HIS FATHER'S CAR KEYS**

89. **AMBIENCE: TV PLAYS IN BACKGROUND**
90. **SFX: WHISKEY POURED INTO GLASS**
91. **JUMBE:**           **(sipping from glass)** Mmm, that tastes good!  
Nothing beats whiskey on the rocks after a hard day's work, and enjoying an evening with my beloved wife.  
**(laughs)** I think this is a good moment to tell you some news, Mama Niki.
92. **MRS. JUMBE:** What news, Jumbe? What is it?
93. **JUMBE:**           Guess what! I gather that Msoto and his family have actually moved out of the Tandika slum!

**94. MRS.JUMBE:** **(shocked)** I knew it! Didn't I tell you? He must have been behind the robbery. How else could he afford a better life after he quit his job as our security guard? We should inform the police!

**95. JUMBE:** No, not yet. I still don't have enough information. Just moving to a better place is no proof of anything. Msoto could have won the lottery for all we know.

**96. MRS. JUMBE:** Lottery! He and those thugs who stole my car should be behind bars.

**97. JUMBE:** They will be, they will. But... on another subject...

**98. SFX: JUMBE SIPS HIS DRINK**

**99. JUMBE:** ...Do you know what's up with Niki? He's been holed up in his room all day.

**100.MRS. JUMBE:** I've no idea. I hope he's studying.

**101.JUMBE:** Maybe... Yes, maybe. You know what? Let's go out for a walk. Shall we go and visit Mama Nadina? I heard she was sick...

**102.MRS. JUMBE:** Oh, yes, I didn't know! Let me get my shoes.

**103.JUMBE:** Me too.

**104.SFX: FOOTSTEPS ON CARPET - TWO PEOPLE LEAVING**

**105.SFX: DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING**

**106.TENSE MUSIC**

**107.SFX: DOOR ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROOM OPENS**

**108.NIKI:** (from this side of the room) Great! Finally my parents are gone! AND they've left *without* the car. This is my lucky day! If not today... then when?

**KW BEGIN**

**109.SFX: BUNCH OF KEYS BEING PICKED UP**

**110.SFX: HURRIED FOOTSTEPS**

**111.SFX: DOOR OPENING**

**112.OUTDOOR ATMO - SUBURB IN THE EVENING**

**113.NIKI:** (excited) Bingo! Just what I need! I have to show Mercy that I'm better than Dan. Once I've taken her for a ride in this, she'll forget about that idiot.

**114.SFX: CAR ALARM BEEPS, UNLOCKING**

**115.SFX: CAR DOOR OPENING**

**116.SFX: CLOTH RUSTLE (NIKI SITS DOWN)**

**117.SFX: CAR DOOR CLOSING**

**118.SFX: NIKI BUCKLING UP**

**119. NIKI:** Now that’s what I’m talking about!

**KW END**

**120. SFX: IGNITION KEY TURNING – CAR ENGINE STARTS AND REVS  
SEVERAL TIMES**

**121. NIKI:** (thrilled) Yeeeeeah!! Let’s hit the road!

**122. SFX: RADIO ON, LOUD HIP-HOP MUSIC**

**123. SFX: CAR SKIDS AWAY AT FULL SPEED**

**124. MUSIC TRANSITION**

**125. OUTRO- NARRATOR:**

That winds up the seventeenth episode of this Learning by Ear radio drama, "Crossroads Generation". What will happen to Niki now? He’s stolen his father’s car and driven off, even though he doesn't have a license! And how will Dan respond to Mercy's rejection? Find out in his video blog at [dw.de/lbe](http://dw.de/lbe). You can also follow us on Facebook. Until we meet again for another action-packed programme - take care, and bye-bye.