

Learning by Ear 2013

Crossroads Generation - Facing Tough Choices

EPISODE THREE: A Rocky Start

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List of characters by scene:

SCENE 1: DAN AND NIKI MEET IN THE CLASSROOM

- DAN (M, 16)
- NIKI (M, 16)
- PRINCIPAL JULIETTE (F, 50)
- MERCY (F, 15)
- JAEL (F, 15)
- NOISY STUDENTS (F/M, 15/16)
- TRUDY (F, 15)

SCENE 2: MSOTO AT PRINCIPAL JULIETTE’S OFFICE.

- PRINCIPAL JULIETTE (F, 50)
- MSOTO (M, 45)

SCENE 3: MERCY AND PRINCIPAL JULIETTE SHOP IN TOWN

- MERCY (F, 15)
- PRINCIPAL JULIETTE (F, 50)

SCENE 4: NIKI AND JUMBE DRIVE BACK HOME FROM SCHOOL

- JUMBE (M, 45)
- NIKI (M, 16)

1. INTRO - NARRATOR:

Welcome to our third episode of "Crossroads Generation", a Learning by Ear radio novella about three students who have to make tough decisions every day. But before we meet Mercy, Dan and Niki in their new school, let's recap on what's happened so far.

Remember, Mercy sneaked into her new school without telling her father Msoto where she was going. Even the guard couldn't stop her:

2. GUARD (EP02, LINE 28): "Hey! You! Young girl! Stop! (...) Stop that girl! Stop her!"

At Bongo Academy she confided her problem to Principal Juliette:

3. MERCY (EP 02, 54): "It's the whole truth, Madam Principal. My father would rather marry me off than see me come to Bongo Academy!"

Her teacher was shocked, but she believed her:

4. JULIETTE (EP 02, 55): "All right, Mercy. I'm going to make an exception for you. [...] You can start school without a school uniform."

5. SFX: school bell

So there we are. "A Rocky Start" is the title of our third episode. It's the first day of term at Bongo Academy, and the students are waiting impatiently in their neat and well-appointed new classroom for the teacher to arrive. Mercy hasn't arrived yet, but Dan and Niki are already at their desks. And - there's some tension in the air...

SCENE 1: DAN AND NIKI MEET IN THE CLASSROOM

6. SFX: CLASSROOM ATMO

7. DAN: (addressing class) Hey, everybody. As we're all new in this class, I'd like to officially introduce myself. (starts clapping a rhythm) Here we go! (sort of rap or rhyme poetry) My name is Dan. I am not from your clan! If you think you have a plan, then talk to Dan. If you believe that you can, then I'm your man. If you don't have a plan, go fry in a pan. Now if you're my fan, then gimme a hand!

8. SFX: WILD APPLAUSE FROM STUDENTS ESPECIALLY GIRLS

9. NIKI: (refusing) Oh no, no, no, listen, Dan, I'm not your fan. With your strange accent and your bad attitude. Listen up, guys: (same rap or rhyme poetry) My name is Niki, I can be a little tricky, if you wanna get freaky. Niki ain't picky, unless you're sticky. I am Niki and I'm just a little cheeky!

10. SFX: MORE WILD APPLAUSES FROM CLASS ESPECIALLY GIRLS

11. DAN: Wow, what a pathetic rhyme!

12. SFX: FOOTSTEPS IN HIGH HEELS. JULIETTE WALKS IN WITH MERCY

13. PRINCIPAL JULIETTE: (ironically) Well, what a nice greeting for the principal. (serious) That's enough now! Silence, everyone!

PIN DROP SILENCE

14. JULIETTE: That’s better. Now I’d like to introduce you to another student who’s going to be joining this class. Everyone please meet Mercy Msoto.

15. SFX: BEWILDERMENT AND SHOCKED REACTION FROM STUDENTS

16. JULIETTE: Yes, I know, she’s not wearing our school uniform. But that shouldn’t bother any of you. I want you all to welcome her and make her feel at home. **(To Mercy)** Mercy, go ahead and sit down. **(To Niki)** And you! Yes, you, what’s your name?

17. NIKI: **(politely)** My name is Niki. Niki Jumbe, Madam.

18. JULIETTE: **(strict voice)** Niki Jumbe, from now on you’re the class prefect. If anyone misbehaves, or breaks the school rules, I want you to note down their names and bring them straight to me. Our motto at Bongo Academy is "Hard work, good chances". And that’s exactly what awaits you here. So open your books, and enjoy your first day at our school. Your maths teacher will be here in a minute.

19. SFX: HIGH HEELED SHOES WALKING AWAY

20. SFX: DOOR CLOSED

21. MERCY: **(timidly)** Excuse me, may I sit here next to you?

22. JAEL: **(sarcastically)** Girl, excuse yourself! Sorry, but no. This seat is taken.

23. SFX: STUDENTS ARE STARTLED BY JAEEL'S RESPONSE

24. NIKI: Hey, hey! I'm in charge of this class now. This girl – Mercy, right? – will sit right there next to you, Jael. That seat is empty. If you don't like it, then move!

25. JAEEL: Good idea, Mr. Policeman. I'm better off sitting somewhere else anyway.

26. MERCY: I'm sorry – I didn't mean to offend you.

27. JAEEL: Who said anything about being offended? Do I look like someone who could be offended by someone like YOU? A dirty, ragged, stinking, barefoot girl? No way... You're not even in my league, and you're definitely not from my class! I don't understand why they spend all that money on scholarships for people like you. All they do is spoil this school's great reputation! Fine, go ahead, take the seat. It's all yours, you witch!

28. SFX: STUDENTS REACT WITH SHOCK

29. SFX: JAEEL GRABS HIS STUFF

30. TRUDY: Ignore her! You can sit with me. I'm Trudy.

31. MUSIC INTERLUDE

SCENE 2: MSOTO AT PRINCIPAL JULIETTE’S OFFICE

32. SFX: OFFICE ATMO

33. SFX: HIGH-HEELED FOOTSTEPS ENTERING

34. PRINCIPAL JULIETTE: Sorry to keep you waiting, Papa Mercy. I had to introduce your daughter to her new classmates.

35. MSOTO: **(confused)** I don’t get this. This school is not our level. We can’t afford it. My daughter doesn’t belong here. The students are probably making a laughing-stock of her right now.

36. SFX: JULIETTE SITS DOWN

37. JULIETTE: Mr. Msoto, I have been a teacher for the last twenty years, and in my entire career I have never seen anyone as determined to learn as your daughter. Did you know she outran our security guard just to get to my office?

38. MSOTO: Mercy did what?

39. JULIETTE: Never mind. That’s beside the point. What I’m saying is: let’s give her the chance to study. She deserves it. She earned it, for goodness’ sake. Surely you can’t want her talent to be wasted in somebody’s kitchen!

40. MSOTO: What about all the things she needs? The uniforms? The shoes – **(stresses)** the Bongo Academy recommended leather shoes! The –

41. **JULIETTE:** Don't worry about that. I will personally take care of all this. As I told you, your daughter is hungry for knowledge, and we're here to feed that hunger.
42. **MSOTO:** So what you're saying is that I shouldn't worry about the cost.
43. **JULIETTE:** What I'm saying is: let Mercy attend the school. Support her. You never know what she could become in the future with a good education behind her.
44. **MSOTO:** **(takes time to think)** Hmm... well... Okay – I'll have to think about it.
45. **JULIETTE:** There's no time for you to think. Mercy is already in class. Either she stays there, or you take her and go home with her right now. The choice is yours. I've said my piece.
46. **MSOTO:** **(takes deep breath)** All right, let her stay. At least for now. But if she tells me the others are treating her badly because of her clothes or her background, I will take her out immediately.

KW BEGIN

47. JULIETTE: Mercy’s not the only student we have here who’s from a humble background. We have quite a few who are here on scholarships. You should be very proud that she’s made it this far. For a student to get the Presidential Bursary, they have to be extremely bright. This is a great honour and a privilege for you.

48. MSOTO: **(grumbles)** Well, if the President is so kind and generous, why doesn't he create a presidential get-out-of-poverty fund as well? Ah, forget it. I need to report for work now.

49. JULIETTE: Of course. Don’t let me keep you waiting. Thank you for your time. And we’ll give you an update on how your daughter is getting on in a month or so.

KW END

50. JULIETTE: But if you don’t object, I'll drive Mercy into town later and have her measured for a school uniform. I’ll get her some shoes as well.

51. MSOTO: Really? You don’t waste time, do you? **(jokingly)** So if I come with you, will you buy something for me, too?

52. JULIETTE: **(confused)** Eh... I beg your pardon? Are you serious?

53. MSOTO: **(laughs sheepishly)** That was meant to be a joke, madam.

54. JULIETTE: (firmly) Excuse me, Mr. Msoto, but I don't entertain jokes like these. Now if you don't mind: goodbye, and thank you for coming.

55. MUSIC INTERLUDE

SCENE 3: MERCY AND PRINCIPAL JULIETTE SHOP IN TOWN

56. SFX: STREET ATMO

57. SFX: FOOTSTEPS - MERCY AND JULIETTE ARRIVING

58. JULIETTE: So, here we are. The uniform shop is right here on the corner.

59. MERCY: Madam, I'm so grateful. I don't know how I can ever repay you.

60. JULIETTE: You can repay me by focussing on your education. That's all I ask of you, Mercy. You know, you remind so much of myself... I also had to struggle to get an education.

61. MERCY: Really?

62. JULIETTE: Oh, yes. It was a long time ago now, but I do know how you feel. You see, my parents didn't want me to go to school because I was a girl, and they thought I could learn all I needed to know at home, from my mother. But my aunt insisted that I should have an education. That's why I promised myself I would never deny any child that right.

63. MERCY: Oh - I didn't know...

KW BEGIN

64. JULIETTE: So, tell me. How was your first day at Bongo Academy?
Did you enjoy it?

65. MERCY: **(pretending)** Fantastic! I liked it so much. All my classmates are very kind and friendly. I even made a friend. Her name is Trudy. She was very nice to me. I'm sitting beside her in class.

66. JULIETTE: Mercy, you're being very polite. I'm pretty sure you must have had a rough day. The first day is never easy for new students, and it's especially hard for ones like you, when most of our students come from very rich families. But don't let that worry you. My staff always do their very best to make everyone feel comfortable.

67. MERCY: And that's exactly how I feel. Comfortable.

68. JULIETTE: Good. That's what Bongo is all about. We welcome everyone, and we're friends with everyone. If any student insults you because of your economic status, I want you to report him or her immediately. Okay? Now then - let's go!

KW END

69. SFX: SHOP DOOR OPENED AND CLOSED, BELL RINGS

70. JULIETTE: Let's try on your uniform... Look! This one over here. What do you think?

71. SFX: HANGER REMOVED FROM THE RACK

72. SFX: CLOTH RUSTLING

73. MERCY: **(excited)** Wow! Bongo Academy uniforms! This still feels like a dream to me. I'm so looking forward to becoming a Bongo Academy schoolgirl...

74. JULIETTE: **(proudly)** And you deserve to be one, Mercy. Go ahead and try on the uniform.

75. MUSIC INTERLUDE

SCENE 4: NIKI AND JUMBE DRIVING BACK HOME FROM SCHOOL

76. SFX: CAR DRIVING IN A BUSY STREET, CAR RADIO ON

77. JUMBE: Niki, you haven't said a word since we left school. Come on – tell your old man how your first day at Bongo went. I'm curious.

78. NIKI: **(disinterested)** What do you want to know?

79. JUMBE: Well, everything, of course! What do you think of the school? Your classmates? Your teachers? I mean, this is a whole new life experience for you, isn't it?

80. NIKI: The Principal made me class prefect.

81. **JUMBE:** **(very excited)** Really? Niki, that’s wonderful! The first day at school and you’ve already made an impression. My son! I’m so happy for you. I’m sure your mum will be thrilled to hear about this.
82. **NIKI:** I’m sure she will.
83. **JUMBE:** **(concerned)** But Niki, you don’t sound very excited. Didn’t you want to be a prefect?
84. **NIKI:** No. I mean yes. It’s not about being made class prefect.
85. **JUMBE:** Oh, okay... So there’s something else? Do you want to make a detour to our favourite fast food joint? We can have a little chat while we’re there.
86. **NIKI:** No, we don’t need to. It’s this boy. His name is Dan.
87. **JUMBE:** Aha... go on... What did he do?
- KW BEGIN**
88. **NIKI:** He’s a sort of...
89. **JUMBE:** Sort of what?
90. **SFX: CAR COMES TO SUDDEN HALT BUT ENGINE STILL RUNNING**
91. **JUMBE:** Okay, I’m all ears now. What did this Danny boy do to spoil Tricky Niki’s mood?
92. **NIKI:** **(angry)** Don’t call me that, Dad! My name is Niki. Plain and simple.

93. JUMBE: Hey, what’s wrong? I’m your father. You can tell me anything. I promise you I’ll do whatever is in my power to solve the problem. Tell me, what did this Dan do to upset you?

94. NIKI: Let’s go home. Forget about it.

95. JUMBE: Niki, we’ve always been open with each other. And you know that I care...

KW END

96. NIKI: (**not touched**) Dad... I prefer not to talk about this any more. Please, let’s just go, okay?

97. SFX: CAR DRIVES AWAY IN A HURRY

98. OUTRO - NARRATOR:

Niki’s having trouble, but he doesn’t feel he can talk to his dad about it. He feels he’ll only be misunderstood. So how will he deal with it? Dan has sensed the rivalry between him and Niki, too, and decided to vent his anger in a video diary for his friends back home. You can have a look at it at dw.de/lbe, or visit us on Facebook to learn more about our programme. Until next time – bye bye.