

## **Learning by Ear – Religious Dialogue: “A Bridge over Gori”**

### **Episode 06: “Burned Hands”**

**Author: Romie Singh**

**Editors: Katrin Ogunsade, Naïma Guira**

**Proof reading: Natalie Glanville-Wallis**

**Expert on African religions: Jean-Félix Belinga Belinga**

#### **List of characters for episode 6:**

- Narrator /Philip, male (17)
- Harry, male (17)
- Layla, male (16)
- Hassan, male (12)
- Ishmail Omer (Layla’s father), male (43)
- Sister Rebecca, female (28)
- Marian Okru, female (16)
- Chief Dembele (Harry’s father), male (51)
- + Students in the background

**1. SIG TUNE UP**

**2. INTRO:**

Welcome to Learning by Ear and Episode 6 of our 10 part radio drama series “A Bridge over Gori”, which tells the dramatic story of how religion and politics drive a wedge between two communities, two families ...and two young people, Harry and Layla, who are forced to hide their love for each other. In today’s episode called “Burned Hands”, Hassan, Layla’s young brother, is refusing his medical treatment, whereas Harry is trying to prevent the already delicate situation from escalating. Philip is one of Harry’s best friends. He tells you the whole story. Listen in and find out more!

**3. PHILIP/NARRATOR:** The drama that unfolded that night filled the Gori Tribune: “Another Church Burns!” read the headline. As editor-in-chief, my father saw to that. Hassan was lying in hospital with serious burns. Because he was only 12, the newspaper had a duty to protect his identity. But everyone knew. The police were waiting for him to get better before arresting him. His father was in too much shock to understand his own son. Now, more than ever Hassan needed a mother. His sister Layla had to fill that space and take time off school.

**Scene 1. In hospital**

**Sister Rebecca, Mr Omer, Layla, Hassan**

**4. SFX: hospital room, monitor peeping, low voices of other patients in the background**

**5. SISTER REBECCA:** Mr. Omer. My name is Sister Rebecca. Your son won't eat. That's why I've had to put him on a drip.

**6. MR OMER:** Can he hear us when we talk?

**7. SISTER REBECCA** I'm not sure. I think he doesn't want us to help him.

**8. LAYLA:** **(whispering)** Hassan, please, say something. Your hands have been badly burned. We need to feed you, open your eyes.

**9. HASSAN:** **(whispering)** Allah be praised. Not by infidels.

**10. SISTER REBECCA:** **(gently)** I think he means me - I am Jewish. Let's leave him to rest. The drip will keep him hydrated.

**11. MR. OMER:** **(desperate)** I'm so sorry Sister. Where did he get all these terrible ideas from? These are not from the Qur'an, the holy scriptures of Islam. Hassan - listen to me!

- 12. SISTER REBECCA:** Shhhh, Mr Omer, you're just getting upset and upsetting my patient, too. Let him sleep. He needs complete rest.
- 13. MR OMER:** Layla, you must stay by his side. I have to work. He needs a mother **(crying)**. Help him, Layla, please, help him to see sense.
- 14. BRIDGING MUSIC**
- 15. PHILIP/NARRATOR:** When I saw Harry at school the next day, I could see by the dread in his eyes that he thought this was the end. His uncle blamed the Omer family and had banned him from seeing Layla outside of school hours. Harry argued that the youths from the Islamic school had clearly used Hassan to do their dirty work – a boy soldier! But his uncle didn't want any excuses. Harry looked at Mat and me for help. But it was Layla I was worried about. And it was to Harry that she turned for comfort.

**Scene 2. Exterior - In school gardens**

**Harry (normal voice), Layla (telephone voice)**

- 16. ATMO: birds, students voices, children playing in the background**
- 17. Cell phone hooting**

**18. HARRY:** (on the phone) Layla? Layla? What's going on? How are you?

**19. LAYLA:** (sobbing) Harry? Is that you? I don't know what to say... I'm so sorry. Please forgive Hassan. He... he...

**20. HARRY:** Layla, what about you? Can we meet? I need to talk to you.

**21. LAYLA:** (sobbing) No, I am alone here. I may not see you alone.

**22. HARRY:** Layla, I need to talk to you, somewhere, please – just for 5 minutes. Under Gori Bridge?

**23. LAYLA:** No... I can't.

**24. HARRY:** No one will see us: it's out of sight... just 5 minutes. Please!

**25. LAYLA:** Alright. But just five minutes, Harry.

**26. PHILIP/NARRATOR:** Harry asked me and Mat to cover for him. He would have to miss the soccer practice. He said it was their duty as Head Boy and Head Girl of the Ubuntu College to prevent their two families from staying in this cycle of bitterness. Mat and I looked at each other. We weren't blind. We could see Harry was fighting for a lot more than that.

### **Scene 3. Under Gori Bridge**

**Harry, Layla**

**27. SFX: Street noise, cars passing by, River flowing, birds**

**28. HARRY:** Layla, when do you think you can come back to school?

**29. LAYLA:** Hassan isn't responding to treatment. I have to stay with him. He's been brainwashed. I read a letter he wrote – he wanted to join our mother in paradise! Oh Harry! **(crying)**

**30. HARRY:** Oh Layla. I'm sure he's been used by the older boys. We need to find out who they are. He was set up.

**31. LAYLA:** **(firmly)** He must take responsibility. We all must – me too.

- 32. HARRY:** Yes I agree, but please don't be so hard on yourself! I'll think of something. You look after Hassan and we'll talk when we're free.
- 33. LAYLA:** How can we do all this when we are not allowed to see each other?
- 34. HARRY:** Let's meet here under the bridge – we're safe here. You must pretend you're jogging. We meet here when you're not with Hassan and then you jog home while it's still light. Come, no more tears. My uncle may not be in the forgiving mood but my father will be: he's a traditional leader. It's his duty to help! Now...dry those beautiful eyes. Please!

**35. BRIDGING MUSIC**

**Scene 4. In the village**

**Harry, Chief Dembele**

**36. SFX: Village sounds: birds, cows, goats, chicken**

**FADE IN CONVERSATION**

**37. HARRY:** And so you see, father, I came to you for advice. How can we help Hassan Omer? The police are waiting to arrest him once he is better. I ask myself, how can punishing a 12-year-old boy and taking him away from his family cure him? It could radicalise him further.

**38. CHIEF:** How can I help?

**39. HARRY:** Please father, explain to me: what did the traditional leader do before there were laws and courts?

**40. CHIEF:** Hah! In a case like this we would bring the child, his parents and family members together on one side. On the other side would sit the victims – in this case, members of the Church, and your Uncle, Father Barnabus. Then I would preside as judge with the elders of our community and we would listen to both sides.

**41. HARRY:** Would you punish Hassan?

**42. CHIEF:** Well, the victims would choose a punishment and we as elders would mediate if we thought it was too harsh or too soft. There were certain rules and customs. We still do this kind of meeting today but as a reconciliation process between the two opposing sides.

**43. HARRY:** What if Uncle drops all charges? After all, the church did not burn down completely.

**44. CHIEF:** Indeed. I would argue, Hassan's burned hands are punishment enough.

**45. HARRY:** Do you think Uncle Bishop will agree with you?

**46. CHIEF:** Well... **(pause)** there's a church involved – a building with a value. And in addition, there's the land that both sides are fighting over. It's not easy. Rightful ownership will be decided by the Development Council.

**47. HARRY:** And our two families? When will that rift heal?

**48. CHIEF:** Not just our families – the two communities. You and Layla must try and bring the two faiths together in dialogue. I have written down a quotation from the Qur’an I heard from a Muslim friend. Here: it says if someone is to be punished, let it fit the crime, but ...ah...here it is...

**49. SFX: Rustle of paper**

**50. CHIEF:** “If a person forgets and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from Allah.” And the Christian Bible says: “Blessed are the peacemakers. For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.”

**51. BRIDGING MUSIC**

**52. PHILIP/NARRATOR:** Meanwhile, Mrs Milulu, the school Director, suggested that Harry choose another girl to stand in for Layla as she was written off absent for the next two weeks. Harry agreed. I was there when they met. Marian Okru was tall and had a very special kind of beauty. I hoped she would divert him from his infatuation with my beloved Layla!

**Scene 5. Outside – school playground**

**Marian, Harry, Philip**

**53. SFX: Birds, student's voices in the background**

**54. MARIAN:** Glad we finally get to meet, Harry.

**55. HARRY:** Yes, Marian, the Debating Club must not die. We have to tackle the next question on the agenda: why do some students refuse to take up maths and science, especially among the girls?

**56. MARIAN:** Oh great question! Well I am one of them, so I'm ideally suited to introduce the topic.

**57. HARRY:** You are? And why?

**58. MARIAN:** Well in a nutshell, I think science is against the teaching of God.

**59. HARRY:** **(surprised)** Oh! OK! Ummm....why?

**60. MARIAN:** I believe God created the Heaven and the Earth in seven days. I'm from the Church of One God.

**61. HARRY:** Oh. Very interesting. You see, I believe Mankind was meant to explore. I'm convinced that THAT is why we are on Earth - to explore, ask questions and seek answers, and if they add up – to act upon them, test them and adjust them.

**62. MARIAN:** **(clapping)** Well, then... let's continue this discussion with the others at the Debating Club!

**63. HARRY** Bye. Phew!

**64. SFX: Walks away. Footsteps approaching**

**65. HARRY:** Oh, hi Philip!

**66. PHILIP:** You are going to need a **whole lot** of patience, Chief Harry. But she's pretty, isn't she!

**67. HARRY:** Who?

**68. PHILIP:** Marian, of course- the girl you've just been talking to!

**69. HARRY:** **(laughing)** Oh her! I didn't notice. I don't let people's looks get in the way of my judgement!

**70. PHILIP:** Right- I'll remind you of those words one day!

**71. HARRY:** Peace and Ubuntu is what we need a lot of right now!  
**(Clapping hands)** Give me five! Ubuntu!

**72. HARRY/PHILIPP:** **(unisono)** Ubuntu!

**73. SIG TUNE UP**

**74. OUTRO:**

And that's all from *Learning by Ear* for today! Sister Rebecca is not giving up on Hassan. And Harry has learnt a lot about being a fair leader from his father. Please join us for Episode 7 of our series "A Bridge over Gori", and find out what will finally happen to Hassan and if the new chair of the Debating Club will succeed in stealing Harry's heart.

And remember, if you want to hear the programme again or tell friends about it, please visit our website at [www dot d w – world dot d e slash lbe](http://www.worldde.lbe). Goodbye for now!

**END OF EPISODE 6**