

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

Episode 08: “A friend gained, a friend lost”

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 8:

- Narrator /Philip, male (17)
- Sister Rebecca, female (28)
- Hassan, male (12)
- Father Barnabus (Harry’s Uncle) male (49)
- Harry, male (17)
- Layla, female (16)
- Roshi, female (16)
- Mat, male (17)
- Marian Okru, female (16)
- + Patients murmuring in hospital background
- + Students chatting in background -indoors

1. SIG TUNE UP

2. INTRO:

Welcome to Learning by Ear and Episode 8 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 “A friend gained, a friend lost”, discover a new Hassan and find out if Harry falls into Philip’s trap. Philip is one of Harry’s best friends, but he’s in love with Layla too. He tells you the whole story. Listen in!

3. PHILIP/NARRATOR: The drama of that night when Layla’s younger brother, Hassan Omer, tried to set fire to the church, saw an increase in activities among civic groups to resolve the conflict growing between the Muslim and Christian communities. But none of this really mattered to me. I had only one thing on my mind - to impress Layla. Meanwhile, Hassan was making great progress in Gori Hospital. Sister Rebecca had a heart of gold and had transformed him.

Scene 1. In hospital

Hassan, Sister Rebecca

4. **SFX: Door opening, steps coming in, other patients murmuring in the background**
5. **SISTER REBECCA:** Hello Hassan, how are you? Here comes your breakfast.
6. **SFX: dishes clattering, tray being placed on a table**
7. **HASSAN:** Hello Sister Rebecca. I am really feeling better today. Um...may I ask you something about your religion?
8. **SISTER REBECCA:** Sure!
9. **HASSAN:** You said yesterday you call yourselves the Lemba?
10. **SISTER REBECCA:** That's right – two thousand and seven hundred years ago there were ten tribes from the Kingdom of Israel which were forced into exile. They lived in an area that today is called Iraq and Syria. Then they spread south through Ethiopia. Here – I'll show you on the map I brought for you.
11. **SFX: rustle of paper**

- 12. HASSAN:** Did they go all the way down into East Africa?
- 13. SISTER REBECCA:** We think so. Look at this picture of the Great Ruins of Zimbabwe. We Lemba believe that our ancestors built this ancient city. But there are other Jewish people in all parts of East and West Africa.
- 14. SFX: rustle of paper**
- 15. HASSAN:** You said that the Lemba have Semitic traditions- what does that mean?
- 16. SISTER REBECCA:** Well- Semitic means Jewish but in fact Jews and Muslims have the same roots. They all go back to Abraham, even if the Jews refer to Judaea, or Israel, and the Muslims to Arabia – Mecca and Medina. Even some traditions suggest a common origin: for example - you say your meat is halal, right? And we say kosher – meaning the animal is slaughtered in the name of God. We Lemba kill our animals the same way. You don't eat pork. We don't eat pork – you see?
- 17. HASSAN:** Sister Rebecca?
- 18. SISTER REBECCA:** Yes, Hassan?

19. **HASSAN:** When I go home, will you come and visit me?
20. **SISTER REBECCA:** **(warmly)** Hassan, I would love to. We can ask your father if I can come and take you out at weekends with my daughter.
21. **HASSAN:** What's her name?
22. **SISTER REBECCA:** Abigail. She will be ten next month.
23. **HASSAN:** So, can I go home tomorrow? PLEASE!
24. **SISTER REBECCA:** **(laughing)** Of course. The burns on your hands are so much better! You've made terrific progress my little man! Now finish up your breakfast!
25. **SFX: dishes clattering**
26. **BRIDGING MUSIC**
27. **PHILIP/NARRATOR:** Hassan was totally unaware of the gravity of the situation he was in. Father Barnabus had filed a case at Gori Central Police Station against him for the arson attack which had nearly destroyed his church. Hassan had no idea. But Harry did. That's why he had come to plead with his uncle. They sat in the church together.

Scene 2. In a church (echo on voices)

Father Barnabus, Harry

28. SFX: church bells ringing 5 o'clock

29. FATHER BARNABUS: The stupid little monster couldn't even burn down the church properly- he just burned himself!

30. HARRY: That little monster is a boy of 12, Uncle. He lost his mother a few months ago. He's like a boy soldier. He was brainwashed.

31. FATHER B: Why are you defending him? Oh I know! You're sweet on his sister Layla. Well, Harry. I'm sorry for you. Instead of concentrating on becoming a priest, you prefer to waste your time trying to protect those heathens.

32. HARRY: **They** are heathens and **we** are infidels. Argh! All this stupid name calling. Uncle, please - I admit Hassan was wrong. But where is your Christian compassion, your African Ubuntu? Your humanity?

33. FATHER B: Look, there are politics involved! It is not just about Hassan. It's about making sure the Islamic Council does not build their mosque on that prime piece of property! We want it for a new cathedral! This attack

has actually helped my cause and generated a lot of sympathy for me. Even Reverend Henry Immanuel from the Charismatic Church has pledged 10,000 US dollars. With him we now have a majority in the Development Council. We can swing the Council vote in our favour.

34. HARRY: Would you really want to partner with the so-called reverend? Uncle! That man is a fraud! He robs the poor!

35. FATHER B: Harry, go back to being a Head Boy at school and leave the big decisions to me.

36. SFX: Church bells ring

37. FATHER B: Now if you don't mind, it's nearly time for evening prayers. Why don't you stay and pray for a change?

38. HARRY: **(softly)** Then I would pray for a change in you, Bishop Uncle!

39. BRIDGING MUSIC

40. PHILIP/NARRATOR: Harry was happier at school. Layla was finally back after caring for Hassan in hospital! Now, their father, Ishmail Omer, was looking after him at home. Today was Thursday, so Layla, Harry, Marian and I would all be at the Debating Club at 3pm. It was the perfect time to carry out my little plan! Now, looking back, I can see I had temporarily gone mad.

Scene 3. At the Debating club

Layla, Harry, Mat, Roshi, Marian, students

41. SFX: Background chat

42. LAYLA: My thanks to Marian for taking over my responsibilities in the Debating Club during my absence and to you all for coming. The question we ask today is: Why are girls in particular not taking up maths and science subjects? Yes... Roshi ?

43. ROSHI: I would like to understand maths, but it's like a different language. Maybe it's the way we are taught.

44. MAT: But it's social conditioning too. In China and Russia women were encouraged to take up science and maths.

45. MARIAN: Exactly, Mat – the countries where religion has been suppressed by atheists, who don't believe in God.

46. General murmur among the students some agree; some don't

47. MARIAN: I believe science is particularly dangerous because it seeks to deny the Bible!

48. MAT: It's not about that, Marian. Science means knowledge. A scientist is simply trying to explain what he sees around him.

49. MARIAN: God is everywhere. There is your answer. Man invents science to take us away from the Lord.

50. HARRY: Can I just remind you, Charles Darwin, the British scientist, whom many people demonise, was a man of the Church in his youth. But he was also a thinker, an observer. He travelled and saw wonderful creatures and was driven by the need to explain how all these species came to exist. You could say God drove him to find answers and write the *Origin of Species*.

51. General murmur among the students some agree; some don't (fade out)

52. PHILIP/NARRATOR: While they were busy arguing, I carefully placed the chain and crucifix on the floor between Harry and Layla - the one Marian had given to Harry, which I now had in my possession. The Debating Club had just come to an end. I was hoping that eventually Layla would see it. And she did!

Scene 4. In school

Layla, Philip, Harry

53. SFX: Students talking, leaving the room. Layla picks up a chain from the floor

54. LAYLA: What's this?

55. PHILIP: A gold crucifix! Is it yours, Harry?

56. HARRY: What? Oh? Um...

57. LAYLA: Harry? Is this cross yours? From your uncle?

58. HARRY: **(hesitating)** Um..no..um... actually... um - Marian gave it to me.

59. LAYLA: Marian? Harry? Why? And why are you wearing it? You know religious symbols are not allowed in school.

60. **HARRY:** I wasn't wearing it...I don't know how it came to be on the floor. I...I...
61. **LAYLA:** **(angry)** Hah! I see. It's late I'm going home. See you tomorrow.
62. **SFX: fast steps leaving , door slamming.**
63. **PHILIP/NARRATOR:** Harry could so easily have lied. But he was an honest man. Layla was shocked. I jumped in there. Here was my chance!
64. **SFX: Opening door, fast steps – Philip catches up with Layla**
65. **PHILIP:** **(whispers)** Can I walk you home Layla?
66. **LAYLA:** **(louder for Harry to hear)** Yes, Philip – how very kind of you to offer. Please walk me home.
67. **PHILIP/NARRATOR:** I thought I would feel over the moon - but walking next to Layla just increased my sense of guilt. I said goodbye at her house and ran home. I felt miserable. Just then a photograph lying on my father's desk caught my eye... a picture of a woman – a beautiful, dreamy-looking woman with a baby in her arms. Her face haunted me... but why? I needed to know who she was. But there was no one to ask!

68. SIG TUNE UP

69. OUTRO:

And that's all from *Learning by Ear* for today! Please join us for Episode 9 of our series "A Bridge over Gori", and find out if Harry and Layla succeed in convincing their families to make peace.

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 8