

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

Episode 03: “Starting a Debate”

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List of characters for episode 3:

- Narrator /Philip, male (17)
- Harry, male (17)
- Layla, female (16)
- Roshi, female (16)
- Father Barnabus, Harry’s uncle (49)
- Chief Dembele, Harry’s father (51)
- Village men, women and children
- Students chatter on sports ground

1. SIG TUNE

2. INTRO:

Welcome to Learning by Ear and Episode 3 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 and two families.

Last time, our young friends have realized that being leaders at school does not mean being leaders at home.

In today’s episode called “Starting a debate”, listen to Roshi as she encourages Layla to stand up for herself and find out about Harry’s difficult family history.

Philip is one of Harry’s best friends. He tells you the whole story. Listen in!

3. SIG TUNE UP AND FADE

4. PHILIP/NARRATOR: The debating club was the director’s idea. Mrs. Ayo Milulu had fresh ambitions for the Ubuntu school to win the highly coveted Free Speech Debating Cup. Currently it was in the hands of the Gori High School. We would have to be extremely good to wrench it from their hands. Therefore A.M., as we nicknamed the director, had asked Harry and Layla as Ubuntu College Head Boy and Head Girl, to start the ball rolling. First they had to decide on a room for the new debating club.

Scene 1. In Ubuntu college

Philip Narrator, Harry, Layla

5. **SFX: Sound of footsteps (2 people) walking down corridor, with a slight echo. Door opens**

6. **HARRY:** So this is room number three. What do you think Layla?

7. **SFX. Closes door. Inside room**

8. **LAYLA:** Mmm. I like it. It's much better than the others. I love the windows!

9. **HARRY:** Yes! That should help us throw some light on some of our debates! **(laughs)** A.M. wants us to show her a list of topics that we plan to deal with this term.

10. **LAYLA:** Well, we can't decide for other people. **(Excited)** I know, Harry! Let's conduct a questionnaire!

11. **HARRY:** What kind of questionnaire?

12. **LAYLA:** Like: "Name the issues that concern you in order of importance".

13. **HARRY:** Hey! That's smart Layla! I like it! It will be fun collecting the answers.

14. PHILIP/NARRATOR: And for Harry, working with Layla was fun. You could see it in his face! Oh, how green I was with envy. I kept thinking: That should have been me! I was sure my father had been too pushy trying to put my name forward as head boy! The fact was that A.M. chose Harry and I had to live with that. Now, if I wanted to get close to Layla I would HAVE to join the Debating Club! And I did! **And** the sports club where at least I could watch Layla training with her friend Roshi. As could her brother, Hassan.

Scene 2. On the sports track

Roshi, Layla, Philip Narrator

15. SFX: Sport track, birds, students running in the background, students chatting and talking from a distance

16. ROSHI: **(panting)** Layla, I can feel Hassan watching us. What's with that boy?

17. LAYLA: **(panting)** He accompanies me home, Roshi. He's against me being here – he thinks Muslim girls shouldn't do sport.

18. ROSHI: What nonsense - there are plenty of Muslims in the sporting world. **(panting)** So Layla? What time did we clock for the laps?

19. **SFX: Stopwatch**

20. **LAYLA:** 3 minutes 21.8 seconds.

21. **ROSHI:** Not bad! Look! Just tell that brother of yours to back off. He's wrong!

22. **LAYLA:** I've tried. You know, my mother always told us both the story of the Prophet Mohammed, Peace Be Upon Him, and how he loved wrestling, archery and horse racing. He even had a race with his wife, Aisha and SHE won! Hassan should know that sport **is not** against Islam. But you know Roshi, he's not **all** wrong. There are some strict rules – like what you wear, where you change and who you shower with.

23. **ROSHI:** Look – your arms and legs and head ARE covered. Like mine!

24. **LAYLA:** Yes, but it's so hot – we're dripping with sweat.

25. **ROSHI** We need to ask our sports teacher to allow us to wear the new sports wear specially designed for Muslim women. It's lighter. And with the hijab that just covers the head and tucks in at the back of the neck, it is perfectly acceptable. As for changing, well... you could just go home and change there.

- 26. LAYLA:** And miss out on the fun and discussions and analysis and jokes and laughter when we girls are in the shower? Ai! No! Please! Butyou're also a Muslim. How come you don't worry about being seen by non-believers?
- 27. ROSHI:** We are not conservative in our family. My mum strongly believes that being a woman and challenging the power of men is more important in today's world. We are women first. Then Muslims!
- 28. LAYLA:** That doesn't help me now though! What do I do about Hassan and his madrassa friends? Ai! That Islamic school is very strict.
- 29. ROSHI:** Stick up for yourself, girlfriend! Challenge them! They are not the keepers of the Muslim code of behaviour! Your brother's twelve, for heaven's sake. Tell him both Palestine **and** Jordan have women soccer teams. **They** are not breaking any Islamic law. Nor are **you**.
- 30. LAYLA:** I should show him the poster in our classroom of Nawal El Moutawakel – the first Muslim and African woman ever to win Olympic gold – it was in Los Angeles, 1984. What a wonderful triumph! That's what I want: to win the 400 metre hurdles in the next Olympics!
- 31. ROSHI:** Go Layla go! Come! I'll race you to the changing rooms!

32. SFX: Layla and Roshi sprinting away, laughing and joking

33. PHILIP/NARRATOR: And I watched as the two sped away. Meanwhile, as the weekend approached, Harry was getting ready to visit his father in his home village. Father Barnabus was going, too. As a revered priest he would be celebrated by all the clansmen. So too would Harry as Head Boy.

Scene 3. Outside in the village

Adult voices, Chief Dembele

34. SFX: Village sounds. Cows/birds. Women singing and ululating

35. M/F ADULT VOICES: Welcome! Welcome, Father Barnabus! Welcome Harry! Welcome!

36. CHIEF Dembele: Barnabus, Harry! Come inside. Let's have water.

Scene 4. Inside hut

Chief Dembele, Father Barnabus, Harry

37. SFX: Footsteps, rustle of clothes / sitting - Glasses, pouring water.

In the background: village sounds.

38. CHIEF: Please – sit and have a cool drink. Good to see you.

39. FATHER B.: **(drinking water)** Thank you, brother.

40. HARRY: **(drinking water)** Thank you, father.

41. (OPTIONAL) FADE BACKGROUND CONVERSATION: Improve polite exchange of talk about weather, village, cows, life in the town, Father Barnabus’s work in the town, his business interests...

42. FADE UP VILLAGE SINGING - CROSS FADE WITH CONVERSATION BELOW

43. CHIEF: So tell me what being Head Boy means!

44. HARRY: Our biggest project is the founding of a debating club.
(After a pause - hesitating) And uhm, well, I have to work closely with Layla Omer.

45. CHIEF: **(Clearing his throat)** The Omer family has always been a strong rival to our Dembele clan. We have a history of bitter animosity with that family.

46. **HARRY:** I didn't know... What's it all about, father?
47. **CHIEF:** Land - it was always about land. And it's still about land.
48. **FATHER B.:** The Islamic Council wants to build a new mosque and we in the Catholic Church want to build a new church. Ishmail Omer and I both sit on the Development Committee and we are challenging each other's right to build on the same piece of ground.
49. **HARRY:** **(agitated)** But what's that got to do with Layla and me? We've got nothing to do with ...with ... any of this. I'm Head Boy. She's Head Girl and we've been asked to start a new debating club together. The director wants us to succeed. What am I supposed to do?
50. **CHIEF:** Harry, my son. You can work with Layla Omer by all means, but only in the college. **(Pause)** Tell me, is she pretty?
51. **HARRY:** Yes! Very!
52. **CHIEF:** I see.

- 53. FATHER B:** You know, I had hoped you would consider priesthood Harry.
- 54. HARRY:** Uncle! It's not about that. I'm only 17. I'm not choosing anything. I'm attending the college, an interfaith college. That's what you wanted father. Anyway, **you** didn't consider priesthood. You chose to have two wives.
- 55. CHIEF:** You are right. It is part of my being a chief. The village expects me to take two, even three wives. My father did it and so did my grandfather. It's a sign of power and prosperity.
- 56. FATHER B:** I gave up trying to convert your father years ago! Staying celibate is part of my duty as a priest. It focuses your mind on spiritual things. Harry! You see how different two brothers can be!
- 57. CHIEF:** And we respect each other's choices. You Harry, must choose your own path, but we must guide you to choose one that will bring you happiness.
- 58. FATHER B.:** And one that doesn't cross paths with our family clan.
- 59. HARRY:** What do you suggest?

60. FATHER B: There must be no liaising after school. And no talking to her about our business, isn't that right?

61. CHIEF: My brother, our aim in life should be to bring harmony, not foster conflict. I think Harry and Layla must show leadership and prove that the school was right to choose them as Head Boy and Girl.

62. HARRY: Then we should also look for a way of resolving the inter-family dispute.

63. CHIEF: Good leaders build bridges. False leaders can so easily whip up hatred based on anything to do with identity – race, colour, religion. Will this happen here in Gori: Muslim against Christian- calling upon the name of God? And all because of a piece of land?

64. SIG. TUNE UP

65. OUTRO:

And that's all from *Learning by Ear* for today! Layla is now determined to continue running and Harry is faced with a new dilemma. Please join us for Episode Four of our radio drama "A Bridge Over Gori" and follow Harry and Layla as they discover how hard it is... to be friends.

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 3