

Learning by Ear 2012 – Corruption – The Elephant in the Room

Episode 01 – "At School, At Work and Everywhere"

Text: Victoria Averill

Editing: Johannes Beck, Friederike Müller

Proofreading: Charlotte Collins

CHARACTERS:

Intro:

- NARRATOR

Scene 1:

- LYDIA (FEMALE, 16 YEARS)
- JENNIFER (FEMALE, 55 YEARS)
- NARRATOR

Scene 2:

- MR MWICHULI (MALE, 50 YEARS)
- ALFAYO (MALE, 58 YEARS)

Outro:

NARRATOR

Intro:

0. Narrator: Welcome to Learning by Ear and our new radio drama on corruption called "The Elephant in the Room". Throughout the next ten episodes we will see how corruption plays a big part in many people's lives; how it is deeply rooted in society in many African countries, yet how it is still possible to get on in life without getting involved in it yourself.

The Odhiambos are a typical African family. They want to earn a living, educate their children, and see them grow up in a fair and open society. Yet they see corruption all around them every day. They try their hardest to be honest citizens and not get sucked into paying bribes, but to get ahead through merit and hard work alone. It isn't easy, but they're doing their best.

As you will hear in the next ten episodes, they face many obstacles. Many people try to persuade them that paying a bribe or doing corrupt deals is the easiest option, but they stick to what they believe in - even when those trying to corrupt them are wealthy businessmen and politicians, the most influential people in the land.

In this first episode, "At Work, At School, Everywhere", Lydia, the youngest of the three children in the Odhiambo family, discovers that corruption is widespread in her school.

Scene One:

- 1. SFX:** **Radio on in the house. Noises of someone cooking.
Door opens and slams shut.**

- 2. LYDIA:** Mum! Mum, are you here?

- 3. JENNIFER:** Yes dear, I'm in the kitchen... Lydia, what's the matter?

- 4. LYDIA:** I'm so upset! And angry - I'm - I'm furious!

- 5. JENNIFER:** Why, Lydia? What's happened? Did you do badly at school?

6. LYDIA: Oh, Mum, it's much worse than that. Well - ok, I didn't do as well as I expected in the end-of-year exams – even though I'm sure I should have got much higher marks than the teacher gave me. But what's worse is that some of the laziest, stupidest kids in my class got top grades! I mean, these guys don't even bother to do their homework!

7. JENNIFER: So how are they getting the top grades, then?

KW begin

8. LYDIA: Bribery.

9. JENNIFER: Bribery? What do you mean?

KW end

10. LYDIA: Well, it turns out that their parents - it's almost always the wealthy ones - don't want to see their kids do badly, even if they're lazy. So their parents are paying my teacher to give them better grades.

11. JENNIFER: But that's corruption!

12. LYDIA: I know, Mum. And it seems it's been going on in my school for years and years. I was talking to Tekla about it and she couldn't believe I didn't know. I just never imagined teachers would take bribes! I mean, you're a teacher, and you'd never take a bribe, would you?! Did you know that this stuff goes on? I mean, maybe it's even going on in *your* school, right under your nose?

13. JENNIFER: Well, Lydia, if it is, I don't know about it. I've never talked about it with any of the teachers at my school. I suppose it had occurred to me; but, to be honest, I didn't really want to know, so I've never asked anyone about it.

14. LYDIA: So it's possible that it happens at your school, too?

15. JENNIFER: Probably, yes.

16. LYDIA: But this is terrible!

KW begin

If people are paying to get the grades they need, it means the exam results say nothing at all about how hard you work, or how much studying you do. It just says whether or not you can pay. This is crazy. It makes me so angry! I mean, I thought corruption was fat politicians scamming money, or taking a cut of all the foreign aid that passes through their hands. But really, in schools...

KW end

17. JENNIFER: I'm afraid, Lydia, for some people it's just part of everyday life. But that doesn't mean we have to be like them. My father always used to say corruption was the elephant in the room. No one would actually talk about it, but there it was, bigger than everything, looming over us.

18. LYDIA: But there must be at least some people who play by the rules.

19. JENNIFER: Yes, of course there are. And we have to have faith that there are more people who want to play by the rules than resort to bribery and corruption.

20. LYDIA: But Mum, if that's how people are - especially people like teachers, who are supposed to set us an example - how am I ever going to get the grades I need to go to university, if you won't pay to 'improve' them?

21. JENNIFER: We don't need to 'improve' your grades. You're a very clever girl, Lydia; you always work hard, and because of that you'll get there. You'll see. Do what you know is right and things will work out, I promise.

22. LYDIA: Hmm. I really don't see how. Oh, it all just makes me so angry.

End of Scene 1

23.

NARRATOR: Corruption, as we've just heard, can even be found in schools. Lydia is clearly shocked. She decides she's going to confront her teacher about the bribes.

Meanwhile, Lydia's father, Alfayo Odhiambo, has accidentally uncovered some corrupt practices in the energy sector. Alfayo's company supplies electricity meters that measure the amount of electricity used. In the last few years his company has won some big new contracts, and it's been doing well. But Alfayo has just found out that some of the energy companies he's been supplying the meters to don't exist. They're just names, with no company behind them - so no electricity, either.

Scene 2: Alfayo's Office

24. ALFAYO: (on the phone) So what you're saying, Mr Mwichuli, is that all the electricity meters I've supplied are just sitting in a warehouse? They haven't actually gone to any house or any building - they're all just sitting there?

25. MR MWICHULI: That's right. Oh, come on, Alfayo, don't you get it? It's part of the cover-up. We've set up a lot of fake companies, and the companies have been awarded contracts worth millions. The companies are supposed to supply a certain amount of power to the country. We need your machines to make it look legitimate.

26. ALFAYO: So, what - you're saying that *my* company is now part of this scam, Mr Mwichuli?

27. MR MWICHULI: That's right. You're in it with us. So if you want your company to keep on growing and making a profit, you just keep signing the contracts we send you and don't ask too

many questions. Think of all the money you'll make,
Alfayo!

28. ALFAYO: But I don't want any part of this. I took over this business from my father. He worked very hard to set it up, and I don't want our name dragged through the mud because of some illegal scam. I'm not corrupt, you understand? ...Mr Mwichuli?

29. MR MWICHULI: (pause) Well, to be honest, Alfayo, I don't think you can afford those kinds of principles. **(pause)** Like it or not, you *are* part of this now. **(getting tough)** There are some very powerful people involved in this deal, Alfayo. They could make a lot of trouble for you. Think about that.
(pause) I'll be in touch. **(line goes dead)**

30. SFX: **Putting down the phone**

31. ALFAYO: (Pacing up and down the room talking to himself)

What am I going to do? I can't keep supplying them now I know what's going on. I did suspect something was wrong six months ago, and I just kept taking the orders. It's different now I know for sure. How can I look my family in the eye ? I feel like a fraud. **(pause)** My business seems to be doing well. But now I know none of it's real. It's all part of a great big scam, and sooner or later it's going to blow up in my face. No - I don't want any part of this. I need to speak to my friend Jeffrey and ask his advice.

KW begins**32. SFX: Opens door of his office**

33. ALFAYO: (calling to his secretary) Brenda! Please can you get hold of Jeffrey at the Anti-Corruption Board? Tell him I need to speak to him - and say it's urgent. Thanks.

KW ends **(to himself)** Yes, Jeffrey's the right person to talk to about this. At least he can tell me where I stand. Oh, what a nightmare...

End of Scene 2

MUSIC (FADE UNDER OUTRO)

34. NARRATOR: And that brings us to the end of the first episode of our radio drama on corruption, "The Elephant in the Room", based on real-life stories. As we've just heard, the Odhiambo family can't ignore the elephant in the room – corruption is affecting all their lives, at school and at work. But how will they deal with it?

In the next episode there's a shake-up at the Anti-Corruption Board, and Isaac, the Odhiambos' eldest son, is caught talking on the phone while driving. Will he bribe the policeman? Find out in our next episode of our radio drama. And if you'd like to hear this programme again, please visit our website at www.dw.de/lbe. You can also comment and discuss this episode on our Facebook page. Goodbye for now, and thanks for listening!