

Learning by Ear 2010 – Urban Exodus – “Against the Current”

Episode 06: “Caught between pressure and constraints”

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CHARACTERS:

Scene 1:

- **BEN** (AGRICULTURAL ENGINEER, 29 YEARS OLD)
- **KABO** (FARMER, BEN'S UNCLE, 57 YEARS OLD)
- **BAKI** (26 YEARS OLD, SOCIOLOGIST, FRIEND OF ZEINA AND BEN'S)
- **ZEINA** (24 YEARS OLD, ECONOMIST, FRIEND OF BAKI AND BEN'S)
- **NANA** (22 YEARS OLD, PRESIDENT OF YOUTH ASSOCIATION)

Scene 2:

- **BEN** (AGRICULTURAL ENGINEER, 29 YEARS OLD)
- **TINGO** (32 YEARS OLD, MODERN FARMER)

Scene 3:

- **BEN** (AGRICULTURAL ENGINEER, 29 YEARS OLD)
- **NANA** (22 YEARS OLD, PRESIDENT OF YOUTH ASSOCIATION)

Intro:

Welcome to this new episode of *Learning by Ear*. Today is the sixth episode of our radio series about urban exodus called “Against the Current”.

We’re following the adventures of Ben, Baki and Zeina – three unemployed young graduates who have decided to set up an agricultural cooperative in their village in order to escape the lack of prospects in the capital.

Our heroes have finally created the structure at a general assembly that was attended by most of the villagers. However, it’s a long process and in this sixth episode we’ll find out what new obstacles Ben and his team are confronted with. But first let’s meet our friends at Ben’s in the morning...

Scene 1: At Ben’s. Morning.**KABO, BEN, ZEINA, BAKI AND NANA**

- 1. ATMO** **MORNING AT BEN’S. HENS, LITTLE TRAFFIC, LOW INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC FROM THE RADIO**

- 2. KABO** Congratulations, kids! The general assembly was a real success. All the families in the village were present. There was some real debate. It was exceptional. It's been a long time since I've seen the villagers asking themselves so many questions about their lives, their future. I felt as if I was seeing some of them for the first time.

3. **BEN** You're right, Uncle Kabo! We owe this result to your and Nana's involvement.
4. **NANA** But I do think more women could have come.
5. **BAKI** Well Nana, they were also invited.
6. **ZEINA** In future, we need to come up with other ways of mobilizing them and find other working spaces for them to voice themselves.
7. **NANA** But we shouldn't create a ghetto for women.
8. **BAKI** You're right!
9. **ZEINA** You know that a lot of women won't come because their husbands ask them to stay at home while they're at the meeting.
10. **KABO** That's true Zeina! But it also has to be said that those who did come didn't just listen and clap. They really got involved.
11. **NANA** And voiced their opinions on really important questions!
12. **ZEINA** Exactly, that's why we have to expand women's participation.
13. **BEN** I suggest we create a working group to mobilize women.
14. **NANA** I'll do it. Uncle Kabo, do you want to team up with me?
15. **KABO** Gladly.
16. **NANA** We'll lean on the small number of women who are already

involved.

- 17. BAKI** An essential element of our strategy is to convince people through our actions, through concrete results so everyone can measure the positive impact of our cooperative.
- 18. ZEINA** Many initiatives take off at top speed and then end up as nothing. In the end there's no more enthusiasm or hope.
- 19. BAKI** Then we have to make sure we get results fast so that people remain motivated.
- 20. NANA** There's no other solution but action. We have to immediately launch a concrete project that rallies people around our values and objectives.
- 21. ZEINA** There's something else that's also urgent. We've got nothing in our coffers. If we don't find a solution immediately, the cooperative will be paralyzed.
- 22. BEN** Who has a proposal?
- 23. ZEINA** We have to have membership fees. I'm surprised we didn't mention them at the general constituent assembly.
- 24. BAKI** **(agressively)** Well, why didn't you?
- 25. BEN** Baki, Zeina, please stop arguing. We didn't even touch on all the items on the agenda because everyone wanted to talk, which was good.
- 26. ZEINA** But still ... we should have addressed this important

matter...

- 27. NANA** It's an essential matter. We risk people thinking that this cooperative is only here to distribute money to the poor villagers, like some NGOs do.
- 28. BAKI** That would be the beginning of all the misunderstandings and failure.
- 29. KABO** We're all at the beginning of a transition period. Many families haven't got anything left in their granaries. If we ask them to give us money they'll think we're crazy!
- 30. NANA** That's for sure!
- 31. BAKI** But all the members of the cooperative have to make a concrete contribution. It's a question of principle!
- 32. KABO** But we can't talk to them about money.
- 33. BEN** What form could this contribution take then?
- 34. NANA** That depends on what we want to do. Talking of which, Ben, you wanted to tell us about your new project?
- 35. BEN** I'm almost finished with that project for innovative integrated techniques that will combat soil degradation. This is one of the biggest obstacles to agricultural production and this is where we can move fast and persuasively.
- 36. ZEINA** Tell us more...
- 37. BEN** You know that agricultural establishments are becoming

less and less productive every year because of the overexploitation of resources, the shortage of nutritive elements in soil and pastureland. I am working on a combined agricultural method and technique to kick start a complex interactive system that integrates biological, social and human factors and can be developed in a sustainable manner.

- 38. BAKI** Ben, I didn't understand anything. Tell me what the concrete consequences for the villagers will be.
- 39. BEN** I will encourage them to go back to certain traditional practices and techniques, use certain plants and introduce new ones in the aim to improve the fertility of their land and increase production. I will present the whole detailed concept as soon as I've finished.
- 40. KABO** In the meantime, Baki and I will go to the village chief to ask him about the field.
- 41. BAKI** Let's go, uncle!
- 42. ZEINA** See you later!
- 43. BEN** Good luck to all of us!
- 44. SFX** **STEPS GOING AWAY (BAKI, KABO, INDOOR)**

----- MUSIC -----

Scene 2: Village bar
BEN AND TINGO.

45. ATMO **VILLAGE BAR. CONVERSATION, MUSIC IN THE BACKGROUND.**

46. TINGO Hello. Are you Mister Ben?

47. BEN Yes, that's me. Who are you?

48. TINGO Don't you recognize me? I'm Tingo. I'm the owner of the most modern and efficient farm in the area.

49. BEN Oh really?

50. TINGO You should come and visit. It's a real gem.

51. TINGO Thanks for coming. I won't bother you for long.

52. BEN What can I do for you?

53. TINGO I've come to congratulate you on setting up the agricultural cooperative. It's a brave and costly initiative – both time and energy consuming. I want to propose a deal so that you can launch the cooperative.

54. BEN Really. What's the deal?

55. TINGO Ah ha! You're interested, right? No joke, it's a big business. I'm a peanut producer. I've got one big client in Europe. I produce and he gets everything. It's a good contract with solid guarantees against the ravages that we are familiar

with – the rain, insects and the markets, against all the risks.
Do you see what I'm saying?

56. BEN I don't see what all this has to do with me.

57. TINGO It's simple. I'm offering you the same contract. A fixed contract of fifty tones of peanuts at a good, non-changeable price. But that's not all. I would pay you right now half of the order if you agree.

58. BEN We want to cultivate food crops.

59. SFX **RUSTLE OF CLOTHES, WRITING, SIGNING**

60. TINGO Here's the check! With this your cooperative will be in orbit.

61. BEN **(in a dry tone)** Listen to me Tingo! One of the main objectives of the cooperative is to decrease hunger in the village and its surroundings.

62. TINGO If you redistribute some of this money to the members of the cooperative, the hunger won't only decrease, it will disappear.

63. BEN You know full well that's not true!

64. TINGO Do you need money, yes or no?

65. BEN Yes, the cooperative needs money. We need more than that though!

66. TINGO This is just an advance. Let's say 47 percent of the total.
(silence) Well 45 percent. **(silence)** You're a tough man to

do business with! OK let's say 40 percent. I can't do better than that. Take it or leave it!

- 67. BEN** Thanks for thinking of us and trying to help us raise money. But we're not interested in this kind of activity.
- 68. TINGO** If you have money, you can do whatever you like. But you must admit it's not as if you have much of a choice, in your position.
- 69. BEN** You're wrong! My friends and I have made a choice! And the villagers have acknowledged that choice.
- 70. TINGO** OK! Very well! I won't insist but let me tell you that my offer remains and will be valid for another month.
- 71. SFX** **A CHAIR BEING MOVED – STEPS WALKING AWAY
(BEN, BAR)**
- 72. TINGO** Don't go like that! I've ordered a meal for both of us. The food is excellent here!
- 73. BEN** **(going away)** Thank you but I'm not hungry! Have a good day!

----- MUSIC -----

Scene 3: In the countryside. Afternoon.

BEN AND NANA

- 74. ATMO** **IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. AFTERNOON. BIRDS, CRICKETS**
- 75. SFX** **STEPS (BEN, NANA) ON THE DRY GRASS**
- 76. BEN** Look Nana, here we can see how streaming is damaging the soil. We need a series of mini-dams to put a brake on soil erosion and to recuperate water. Can you imagine everything we could do here, if there was water all year around?
- 77. NANA** Ben, you know this sort of work is well beyond our means.
- 78. BEN** That's true... for now in any case... But I think we can do quite a lot more. We just need to be brave...
- 79. NANA** **(LAUGHTER)**
- 80. BEN** What's so funny?
- 81. NANA** To hear you say "brave".
- 82. BEN** Really? Why?
- 83. NANA** We've been walking in the countryside for about an hour now and I'm sure you wanted to talk about something else.
- 84. BEN** Er... I... yes... you're right... I just wanted to be alone with you. Alone with you.
- 85. NANA** Me too. Are you scared of being seen with me?
- 86. BEN** You know what our society is like. What people are like.

They just stick a negative label on you for nothing. And that could damage our image and our cooperative.

- 87. NANA** That's true but it would be a mistake to try to hide. In any case, it's impossible. I guarantee that over 10 people have already seen us from a distance and are already telling who knows what kind of stories in the village. It makes no sense to hide in the bush. We just have to show everybody that our relationship is sincere and solid. If it is...
- 88. BEN** Do you doubt it?
- 89. NANA** Are you scared to prove it?
- 90. SFX** **FAST STEPS (NANA) GOING AWAY ON THE DRY GRASS, BEN CATCHING UP WITH HER**
- 91. BEN** Nana! Wait!
- 92. BEN** ...Now you see you're the one who lacks courage!
- 93. NANA** Yes! Night is falling. Let's go.
- 94. SFX** **STEPS ON THE DRY GRASS (NANA, BEN)**

Outro:

That's the end of *Learning by Ear* for today. It was the sixth episode of "Against the Current", a series about urban exodus. Thank you for your attention.

Our heroes' fight continues in the village. They have financial problems to overcome. Will the team find a way of getting rid of the obstacles that threaten the cooperative?

And what about Ben and Nana? Will their love blossom? To find out, tune in to the next episode.

If you want to listen to this program again or give us any feedback visit our website www.dw-world.de/lbe or send us an email at lbe@dw-world.de.

Don't forget to tune in next time!

END OF EPISODE 6