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My cousin Meda Jambo, was married to a man who had AIDS but she did not know about that. Unfortunately, they did not go to the hospital for the blood test, though my cousin was a nurse at Malosa Hospital.¹ After three months of their marriage the man began coughing. When he went to the hospital, he was told that he had tuberculosis and he received the treatment. After a few weeks the husband began suffering from malaria and he was vomiting. He went again to the hospital and was treated and recovered. He stayed [at home] for one month and again began to complain about the coughing and headache. He went back to the hospital again and received the treatment. After some weeks he began having diarrhea, and at the same time my cousin Meda was becoming thin. The husband received treatment again and recovered. Then after a month the husband had shingles and diarrhea at the same time, and he was taken to the hospital where my cousin told the examiners that they should test her husband's blood. They found the man had AIDS. She was told that and she told them to examine her blood also. She was told that she had HIV positive from her husband. She became worried, and regretted that they did not go for a blood test before their marriage. She called her mother to come to Malosa hospital, and she told her mother about the problem. Her brother, Henry Jambo, is also working at Malosa Hospital as a Medical Assistant. He was also told, and he became worried because Meda is his only sister. There were only two children in their family, so he was very sorry to hear that his sister had HIV positive.

[That time that] Meda's husband was admitted to Malosa hospital, Meda was pregnant, 4 months. The man lived in the hospital for two months and was then told to go home. His relatives told Meda that they wanted to take her husband home because they wanted to try herbs from the herbalist, and they did so. During that time Meda was always worried, she was growing thinner and thinner. She worried why she had married without the blood test at the hospital, she knew that she would die and that her child would also die. After three months [at home] he was taken to the hospital again, when his relatives saw there was nothing good in him. And during that time he was very seriously ill, always vomiting, diarrhea, and feeling pain everywhere in his body. He was always crying and he was very thin.

After a month Meda gave birth to a weak child who lived only for one week. Meda began coughing and having malaria at the same time. She was also admitted at Malosa Hospital, and recovered after two weeks. She stayed for one week [at home] and her husband died.

I went to attend the funeral. After the funeral ceremony ended I went to Meda's house where I found her crying with her mother. After some minutes Meda stopped crying and she was telling me her problems.

Meda: Alice, have you seen the dangers of AIDS, my cousin?

Alice: (I said nothing, I just looked at her).

Meda: I am telling you because you are my cousin and I am a nurse. I did something wrong to myself, I did not know what I was doing. I just got married to that man without thinking about AIDS, which is killing many people nowadays. I know that I will die soon, and my child will die too.

Alice: No, don't think about the death, Meda. God will know what to do with you.

Meda: No, what can God do with me? Nothing. Just learn a lesson, Alice. You have to examine your blood before you get married or you have a boyfriend. Another matter is using a condom, but if you forget one of those two methods, nothing will be good in you, I tell you.

Alice: I have nothing to say since you know that my first husband died and I am married now to another man but we didn't examine our blood. Maybe I will see the same problem that you have seen, my cousin.

¹ The hospital is between Balaka District and Zomba District, about 20 minutes from Liwonde, about 25 from where we were staying at the Mangochi turnoff, and a bit further from Alice's village.

Meda: Many people are saying that death is death. Everyone has his way of death, but that is not true. That is why many people are dying, because they refuse to use a condom when having sex and they don't want to examine their blood.

Alice: Where did your husband take that AIDS? Did he have another wife somewhere?

Meda: Maybe. It means that he had girlfriends somewhere and he was not having sex with condoms. It was plain, since many people say it's impossible to eat sweets in their packets because they are tasteless.

Alice: That is the only problem. Women always depend on their husbands, but the husbands find it difficult to depend upon their wives only. They need to have other women outside. I don't know why.

Meda: I am very worried now. Look at my body. Was I like this?

Alice: No, you were fat, and now you are very thin and your child looks unhealthy. Is he sick?

Meda: My child is sick since yesterday. I would like to go to the hospital. I failed to go to the hospital yesterday because my husband was very seriously ill and I had no chance to go there. But tomorrow I will go though I am still crying.

Alice: What is your child suffering from?

Meda: I think she has malaria and she is coughing and yesterday she was vomiting.

Alice: Very sorry indeed.

I went back home the same day and at the bus station I met with a certain man who was coming from Malosa Hospital. He went to see his uncle who was admitted there. His uncle was caught with TB and was receiving TB treatment. He greeted me and asked me where I was coming from. I told him that I was coming from my cousin's where I went to attend the funeral. Her husband was dead. That was a key to him to talk about what he saw at the hospital.

Hospital Man: Aaah, nowadays funerals are common. Every day people are crying [because relatives died] whether in the villages or hospitals there is nothing different. I went to Malosa Hospital to see my uncle who is admitted there. He is receiving TB treatment, but what I have seen there, I cannot tell you.

Alice: Tell me, man, what have you seen?

Hospital Man: Aaa, the TB ward for men is full of people, and some beds have two patients, and some patients are sleeping under the beds. Fancy that. What I have experienced is that those TB patients will end up with AIDS, I think they have HIV positive.

Alice: How do you know?

Hospital Man: Don't you know that TB is a sign of AIDS?

Alice: Might be.

There was also another man at the bus station who was going to Lilongwe, he went to Malosa to chat with his aunt who is working in the Post Office, and he was going back to Lilongwe, his home.

Lilongwe Man: I wonder why more women are dying with AIDS. Men are dying, of course, but not in a large number, like women. They say that AIDS is a [sexually] transmitted disease, and women themselves cannot have sex without a man. It's a man and a woman, but why are women only dying?

Alice: But another reason is that men can have many women to move with, and even polygamy, and if that man has HIV positive and sleeps with his three women it means that those three women will die, and he also will die. In that way there is a ratio of 3 to 1.

Hospital Man: But there are other women who move with many men, like bar girls, those can also kill many men at once.

Alice: But there is a difference. Think about the villagers. In the village it's where we believe that we can find better women than in town. But village men are having more wives than those who are in town. Those who live in the villages can marry four wives because they will be looking after themselves. The wives will be depending on field work and not on their husband. If one of the woman is lazy, that one herself will suffer from hunger and she will lack clothes. But most men who live in towns cannot marry many wives, fearing that the wives will starve because the man cannot manage to buy food, clothes, pay rents, water, lights, school fees for three women. Since there are no fields in town for the women to be busy in, therefore it is not easy for the men to have more than one wife in towns.

Hospital Man: I think more women are dying because their stomachs are different from men's. I could even say that their bodies are weak because many things are generally done in their bodies, like receiving sperms, having menstruation and bearing children. Therefore, their bowels are open most of the time.

Lilongwe Man: There is no way we can run from the AIDS disease because nobody can control nature. Who can manage to stay with a marriage or have sex with the same person all the time? And it's impossible to use condoms all the time, especially with your wife.

Hospital Man: How can you use a condom with your wife? If you do so it means that you don't want to have children in your house, and the wife herself cannot agree with sex using a condom unless there is a great problem, like if the wife had an operation two or three times during delivery. Then it can be reasonable to use condoms to avoid having the other pregnant.

Lilongwe Man: If you have that problem just go to the hospital and tell the doctors, and tell them to make her stop bearing (TL). But other people could say that they have traditional herbs which they drink and they cannot get AIDS.

Alice: Is that true?

Lilongwe Man: Maybe, but I cannot believe it. What I know is that we shall all die with AIDS, and there is nobody who will not taste AIDS.

Hospital Man: It seems that God wants to destroy the whole world through that disease. We shall all die with AIDS because it is now found in many diseases, like TB, malaria, headache, diarrhea and shingles. If one suffers from one of these diseases, you will just hear that that one has AIDS. But people were suffering from them a long time ago, before AIDS came. But today everything is AIDS, and it means that everyone will die with it because nobody could say that I don't suffer from malaria, and nobody can avoid having diarrhea. And especially shingles, how can you avoid them? Let God himself do whatever he has planned to us. We are his people and he is free to do whatever he wants with us.

Lilongwe Man: I think the disease is from the Government. It was purchased from somewhere because they would like few people to remain in this Malawi country.

Alice: Aa, can it be possible Sir? Purchasing a disease to kill people, why?

Lilongwe Man; Why are they forcing people to get family planning as if they help people in looking after their children? [unless helping to look after the children, they don't have a right to speak on this issue] They are just killing women, especially during the delivery day, deliberately in order to reduce the population, and they are killing many people through family planning injections and tablets. They have also added something which they call a small operation for men and women. They need all the people in this country to stop bearing children, that is why they are just killing deliberately.

Nobody answered him now because the bus going to Mangochi came and therefore the man who was coming from the hospital and I boarded the bus, and we left the man going to Lilongwe at the bus station waiting for the Lilongwe bus.

I stayed at home for only two weeks and I heard a message that my cousin Meda's child was dead and I went to attend that funeral again. After the ceremony she was still crying for her child because the child died of AIDS but it was none of its' concern since it was a baby. It never did sex in its life but has died of it so long her mother was worried. She also told me that she was on her way to the grave also because she also had AIDS. During that time Meda was very thin and she was complaining about malaria and headache. She even said that it was just useless to her to go to the hospital because she already knows that her problem is AIDS and it has no medicine. Why should she trouble herself going to the hospital when her child has died, but she was trying to go to the hospital with that child. She could let herself die at home, rather than troubling people to give her care at the hospital. I told Meda that she should not worry too much because otherwise she can die with worries. God will provide and she can stay alive, even for five years ahead, but she shouldn't get worried.

Now on my way home I met a certain woman who asked me about my relationship with Meda because it was her second time seeing me attending a funeral at Meda's house. I told her that Meda is my cousin, she is my uncle's daughter, and the woman continued asking me questions concerning Meda.

Woman: Your cousin is growing thinner and thinner, why?

Alice: I cannot know, maybe she is worrying too much about the death of her husband and her child. Even if it could be me, I could have grown thin due to worries. Losing two people at the same month is not a joke. How do you look at it, or how do you think?

Woman: Nothing. I thought that she is sick perhaps. I heard other women at the funeral saying that her husband died of AIDS and the child too has died of AIDS and that is why she is growing thin.

Alice: They meant that she has gotten the disease from her husband?

Woman: I think so.

Alice: Was her husband too movious [promiscuous] or my cousin is a prostitute?

Woman: But the husband was too movious, and I think he was not using condoms. Your cousin will die of AIDS but she is a very innocent woman and friendly. She is not a prostitute and she was born the only daughter in her family. Look, nobody can run away from AIDS whether a married person or not. Meda was married and she was depending on her husband only, but today Meda has gotten AIDS from her husband. Could she refuse to have sex with her husband out of fear of getting AIDS as if she knew that her husband would transmit AIDS to her?

Alice: I think AIDS will kill all of us in this world because nobody is 100% innocent. Most of the people are not concerned with this dangerous disease.

Woman: I think family planning for women is good, only that the medicine is bad for some women's bodies. Many men are living longer though they have HIV positive, but women cannot live longer than a man because if she has HIV positive and she is pregnant, just know that she will suffer from AIDS soon after bearing her child. Now the bad thing is, the child dies and the woman dies too. Had it been that the child lived and only the woman dies, it could be a little bit better. Now it is better to use family planning because if you are infected with AIDS you can live longer and you can die alone rather than losing two lives at once.

Alice: That can be true, sister. I think losing two lives at once cannot be good. It's better even to stop bearing, because in that way it means you have saved your life for some day.

Woman: Aaah, bearing a child for nothing, keeping a pregnancy for nine months but at the end you gain nothing, you just feel pain when delivering that child for nothing. It's better to be barren than bearing a child and letting her/him die and then you follow your child.

We reached her home and I left her there and proceeded with my journey to the bus station. No sooner had I arrived at the bus station than the bus arrived and I boarded the bus. In the bus I sat on a seat with a certain woman who was coming from Zomba Hospital. Her brother was admitted there. He had a car accident and he was injured. She greeted me and I answered her. She continued by asking me where I was going and where I was coming from. I told her that I was going home and I was coming from a funeral, my cousin's child died. She said sorry to me, and she told me that she was going to Balaka (her home) and she was coming from Zomba hospital where her brother was admitted due to the accident he had. The woman now felt free to tell me what she knew:

2nd woman: Many people are dying in this world everyday, I tell you. I think we shall all die in a few years coming, and nobody will remain alive. This AIDS disease is from witchcraft. People are just buying it from the witch-crafters and killing their friends with it. Every disease now is AIDS, whether you suffer from coughing, diarrhea, headache, all those symptoms of AIDS nowadays. Can that be true? At Zomba Hospital, about 5 to 7 people die every day and they say that those people are dying of AIDS. Why not other diseases, everything is AIDS nowadays, whether at the hospital or in the villages. If one's body is swelling and his/her hair has grown thick, they just conclude that it is AIDS. Eee, the world now has changed for the worse.

Alice: Maybe God is annoyed with our deeds.

There was also a certain old man on the same seat, we were three people on one seat. The old man said:

Old Man: These days are different from our days when we were young. Look, people are just moving anyhow and they don't fear getting diseases. In the past we had the herbs that we were drinking in order to protect ourselves from getting transmitted diseases like gonorrhea and syphilis, but nowadays there is AIDS, which cannot be protected by drinking any medication or even herbs. The only way is to avoid having sex, which is impossible unless you were born useless², especially men but for a woman it is impossible. Because even though a woman was born barren she can still have sex, but some men were born useless, they don't even admire a woman, they cannot be attracted by any woman. Those men cannot get AIDS because they are infertile and they don't do sex.

2nd woman: Those men can also get AIDS. I heard that there are other ways of transmitting AIDS, like using the same razor blade with your friend, being injected using the same needle which someone has used, taking care of a AIDS patient and eating together with the AIDS patient. The dangerous way you cannot

² Alice says "useless" doesn't mean the man is "barren", but that "he can't release sperms, he just stays there."

run from is through injection, because you cannot know whether someone has used the same needle, and maybe that one is HIV positive, especially our injections found in the villages.

Old Man: Even at the hospital, everywhere it is the same. Don't you know that the Government would like to decrease the population and they are killing people deliberately at the hospital? Nobody nowadays can be admitted at the hospital and come back alive. If once your relative has gone to the hospital and been admitted there, just know that you are expecting to hear about the death of that relative of yours. Those members of staff are spreading AIDS through injection and they are killing people through poison medicines. In past years, people were dying, but not like nowadays. This is worse. Why? That is why they are forcing people, especially you women, to get family planning. Their aim is to reduce the population numbers. Women were bearing children, even up to 15, and nothing was happening. But nowadays, you can find that a girl with one child is meeting with many problems, like being operated, continuous bleeding (monthly period). The doctors are just killing women during delivery day, and they force women to stop bearing, and maybe they can stop her bearing through an operation without letting her know she will stop bearing. She just sees after some years that months are passing and she is not getting pregnant.

Alice: But how do you think we can avoid being transmitted this dangerous disease, AIDS?

2nd woman: Maybe we should remain unmarried. And if we are ill, we shouldn't go to the hospital, we should just be buying tablets and the grocery store and avoid using the same razor with someone.

Alice: But you have said that another way of getting AIDS is through taking care of an AIDS patient, now what would you do if your young sister or your daughter will suffer from AIDS? Who will give care to her?

2nd woman: I cannot leave my daughter dying while I am alive. I know that nobody can give care to her while I am there. I will be responsible for that, and I think there is no way now we can avoid being transmitted the AIDS disease. Everyone will die of this disease AIDS.

Old Man: Madam, there is no way you can avoid AIDS. It is a Government disease, I tell you. The Government purchased it from outside countries. They lost much money buying that disease, do you think you can find ways to avoid it? Though they are announcing through the radios every day, just know that they would like to keep us from knowing what they are doing, but people know.

Alice: How do you know?

Old Man: You are very young, my daughter, I was born earlier than your father. I tell you I know the world very well. I know how to differentiate the things which were happening in the past and the things that are happening today. If the Government did not purchase the disease, where has it come from? How did they know that the disease is called AIDS? Who told them that it is called AIDS? Who was the first person to suffer from AIDS here, and how did he/she get it? There was no AIDS before, not since my birth. But I have just heard about it a very few years ago. Believe me or not, but this AIDS disease was purchased by the Government from outside countries in order to decrease the population in this country. Let the Government do whatever it has planned. Everyone will die. But they should know that God will punish them one day.

The man got off at Liwonde station and I remained with the woman going to Balaka. And she said:

2nd woman: Have you heard what the man has said?

Alice: Yes, and I have nothing to comment.

2nd woman: We shall all die, my friend, especially women have no ways to run away from death. We can die of AIDS and we can die also from bearing children.

Alice: Anyway, let it be. What can we do, then?

She got off at Mangochi Turn-off and left me still proceeding on my journey to Ulongwe while she went to wait for another bus going to Balaka. I got off the bus at Ulongwe and I went home. The following day I went to Ulongwe market to buy relish [fish, meat or vegetables to eat with the staple *nsima*]. I met with two prostitutes (bar girls) living at Ulongwe, one of them is my friend Timu and her friend is Abiti Chilembwe, I don't know her first name. I met them talking about a certain rich man who once gave Timu the most money in her life since she began her job of being a prostitute. The story was like this:

Timu: I once slept with a certain rich man in Mangochi, but since that time I never met with him again. That man was very rich, and he was not so stingy. He gave me money so I managed to buy many things at once. I think nobody will give me as much money as that man did.

Abiti: Why not?

Timu: I could have already received it, since that time I slept with many rich men, but they never attempted to give me even K1000 at once [the kwacha exchange rate when our project began was K15=US\$1; in 2001 it was about K75=US\$1]. They are all hard-handed people.

Alice: Timu, can that be a story, my friend?

Timu: Yes, it is my office.

Alice: Aaa, just get married, don't you fear that there is AIDS, a killer disease?

Timu: Death is death, my friend. Everyone will die. Nobody will not taste the death. That is the only way I can get money easily?

Alice: What if you just get married. Can't you get money from your husband? You can also go to town and look for a job in the Bosses' houses as a cook or a house-cleaner, in that way you can also get money easily, rather than being a prostitute as you are. Don't you know that you can die before your time?

Timu: I would be using condoms always because it is now very difficult for me to get married and depend upon one man, because I am now used to having many men in a day in order to get much money. Depending on only one man's money is very difficult for me. And using a condom is not good, because you cannot receive much money at once since the man doesn't feel sweet when he is releasing his sperms, therefore he cannot give you much money.

Abiti: Using a condom is nothing, I tell you. You cannot feel any sweetness if you don't know, and not only a man. And you should know that some men are very clever. The time you give him a condom to put on, he receives it happily, but what he does then you cannot believe. He can make a hole using a needle and make it wide. You can feel that he has put on a condom, but at the end you can feel that the taste has changed. It is now becoming very sweet as if you are having that sex plain. What can you do then, since the man is now about to release his sperms? Do you think he would agree to stop first and put on another condom? If the man has HIV positive, do you think he cannot transmit the disease to you? Nobody can cheat you that there is a perfect way of avoiding getting AIDS. We shall all die with it and nobody will remain alive in this poor world. Everyone should do whatever she/he thinks can help him/her.

Timu: I will just go to the herbalist to take the herbs which protect one from getting any transmittable disease from someone so that I will not get that AIDS disease.

Alice: Aaa, Timu, who do you know who did that and he/she is not getting any transmittable disease?

Timu: Don't you know that some herbalists have herbs which protect people from those transmittable diseases?

Alice: I have never heard that someone has protected herself/himself from getting AIDS through herbs. Tell me which herbalist is that. I would like to go and visit him and ask him to tell me one example of a person who did that and he/she is well protected from getting AIDS.

Timu: I cannot tell you the person and the herbalist, but just know that what I have told you is happening in this world.

Alice: Timu, how many men do you sleep with in one day?

Timu: About 5 men a day.

Alice: O.K., now you would like to increase that figure of men you sleep with by using the herbs to protect yourself from getting AIDS? Do you think that can help you? AIDS can never be protected through herbs, I tell you. I never heard about that in my life.

Timu: Anyway, let it be. Whatever may happen on me, I am ready to receive it.

Alice: O.k., I am going.

Timu: O.K.

After some few weeks my cousin Meda became seriously ill. She was opening her bowels on her bed, vomiting and coughing at the same time. She became very thin and had fevers most of the time. She was admitted at Malosa Hospital where she was working and she was there for a month and a half and then discharged, though she was not healed by that time, and she was taken to her house there at Malosa Hospital [staff often live on the hospital grounds]. She stayed in her house for three weeks and she was taken to her mother's home where she stayed for only two days and then died. People at her home were laughing at her, that she has died of AIDS yet she was a nurse who knew more about AIDS. During her funeral day I heard other people gossiping about the funeral and it was like this:

1st woman: The nurses are the great cheaters. Have you seen this woman? She was a nurse but she has died of AIDS. She was one of the doctors at the hospital who was forcing people to use condoms in their houses

and she was telling people to avoid being prostitutes to avoid getting AIDS. Today she has died of AIDS. Why? Wasn't she using condoms or was she a prostitute?

2nd woman: No, what you should know is that these people (nurses) are servants of the Government. They know that what they tell people is not true, and they can also suffer from that disease. But since that is their job to tell people about those stories, they have to tell people. Whether people should follow what they tell them or not, they don't mind. What they want is money. They receive money at the end of every month. That is all.

3rd woman: Though they need money, they should give good examples to other people. The members of staff at this hospital should die of accidents and not any disease, because they know how to protect themselves and they know many medicines to heal their diseases when they feel pain somewhere. We expect them to suffer from wounds and die of accidents because that happens unexpectedly and nobody can run away from it, but not diseases.

1st woman: Aaa, what I know is that we get other diseases from the hospital. Especially we women because we receive different kinds of tablets from the hospital when we go for the ante-natal clinic and the injections we receive for tetanus are not good. I think they mix them with poison medicines, that is why we women are mostly dying of unknown diseases. This AIDS disease will kill most of the people in our country because the Government needs to reduce the population figure in this country. This AIDS will kill all of us and it will not leave anyone, including the President and his Ministers. Nobody can live without marriage, and nobody can stay in his/her life without getting sick. Everyone will get sick once, and being admitted we receive injections somewhere, and that is her/his time, now he/she can get that dangerous AIDS disease.

2nd woman: Aaa, I think someone purchased that disease from outside countries, or someone went to the country where AIDS is common and he/she has transmitted that disease from that country. I never heard any old man/woman talking about AIDS. This disease has just come in recent years. In the past there were syphilis, gonorrhoea and other diseases like scabies, coughing and diarrhoea, but there was no AIDS disease. People in the past were coughing, diarrhoea, fever, headaches, vomiting, and they were getting thin, but those same things, if it happens to someone now, they say that she/he has AIDS. Why have they decided to put those symptoms in one and give it a name AIDS? There is no way anyone can avoid AIDS. We shall all die of it since the Government has purchased it to kill all its people.

At the same time the coffin was now taken to the grave yard to be buried, and the women stopped talking. When we were coming back from the graveyard, I heard two men talking about my cousin's death.

1st man: AIDS is a great killer. It has taken an innocent lady. This nurse was very innocent and nobody was expecting her to die of AIDS. I am very sorry about her death.

2nd Man: Aaa, was she suffering from AIDS?

1st man: Yes, didn't you hear that her husband died of AIDS? And her child died of AIDS after her husband's death?

2nd man: I knew nothing but I just heard that her husband died some months ago. I did not attend his funeral since I was in Lilongwe where I went to sell rice.

1st man: He died of AIDS. This lady was not a prostitute but her husband transmitted the disease from other women in town since he was too movious. Unfortunately, his wife did not know that her husband has AIDS, therefore in the end she got it from her husband. There was nothing else she could do since he was her husband. It was impossible for her to tell her husband to use a condom in their house from nowhere. The husband could have asked why she decided to use a condom in their house, as if they wanted to do the family planning.

2nd man: My friend, is it possible to use a condom in your house? If you once practice that system, just know that one of you will be a prostitute. Nobody will fear her partner. You shall then all depend on condoms. If you have decided to start family planning, then it is better for your wife to go to the hospital where she can receive pills or injection, but not condoms. If you have agreed to stop bearing then nowadays it is optional whether a man or a woman can be operated on to stop bearing, but using a condom is very bad because each one of you will be doing whatever you want since you will be depending on your condoms. Therefore, your marriage cannot last.

1st man: That is very true brother. In addition to that, using a condom with your wife just shows your stupidity because you loved each other and you promised to depend upon each other, then why use a condom? What can sex be without the sweetness? Can you chew a sweet white sugar in its packet? What

can you feel if your sweet is still in its packet and you are chewing it? It means that you shall just waste your time and trouble yourself showing it, yet you haven't felt anything from it. It is better to stop, nobody can die if he/she is not having sex.

2nd man: Hiii, not having sex? That is nature. God knows why he created people of different sexes and told them to have sex so that the population should be increasing now and then. If you once stop sex, just know that the world will be naked because we shall all die and nobody will be left alive. That will be the end of this our poor world. People should still be having sex in order to bear many children who will replace those who are dead and are still dying.

1st man: But now God doesn't want people in his world. That is why he has sent that dangerous killer disease AIDS to kill all his people. That is why AIDS is killing everybody, whether an innocent person, prostitute and even children who know nothing about sex. Only that they suck milk from their mothers who have AIDS, they also die. Is that good? A good child.

AIDS is not her concern. She never did sex in her life but it just happens that she dies of AIDS. That is very bad. Those children would have replaced their parents who are dying nowadays. But AIDS is killing the whole family.

2nd man: I think that there is no need to do the family planning nowadays.

1st man: Why not?

2nd man: Why use family planning, yet funerals are everywhere daily? Some people know that they have HIV positive, while others no. Some people do not have HIV positive and those people should not use the family planning, because through them maybe the world will still remain with people. Those people's children will replace those who are dead, then there is no need to use the family planning. To those who already know that they are HIV positive, of course they should use family planning, because if they don't do that they will just waste their time since their children will also die of AIDS. Therefore, it will not make any sense, why bear children?

1st man: What I know is that there is nothing good in this world. What we should be expecting is death and nothing more. Those who do not have HIV positive by now should not think that they are safe. A day will come for them to taste AIDS by whatever means, and even if it is not AIDS, still they will die of something and nobody will remain alive. Let God himself do whatever he has planned.

2nd man: That is true my friend.

When they saw that we were nearly at the home where the funeral was, they stopped talking and they sat down waiting for the last prayers.

After a week I went back to Ulongwe. The very same day that I arrived at Ulongwe, I met with a teacher, Mr. Layimbu who was with two private school students [boys] on their way home for lunch. I met them talking about AIDS. These students were complaining that they are just wasting time and wasting their parents' money paying their school fees, yet they will never achieve their goals. It was just a continuation of their story which I found them already talking.

1st student: Sir, though you are telling us to work extra hard, how do you see the world nowadays? AIDS is leading a first position in the whole world, including this small Malawi. Nobody will remain alive in the coming five years. Why are we troubling ourselves working hard in class and wasting our parents' money as if we shall one day work somewhere? We shall all die very soon, I tell you.

Teacher: No, the best way is to protect yourself from that killer disease and concentrate in class, that's all.

2nd student: Aaa, it is worse nowadays than earlier. There is no way you can protect yourself from it. I can protect myself by not even having sex with anyone, but can I tell my father to protect himself from having sex with other women apart from my mother? Could it be possible in our culture?

Teacher: That is very rude. What do you want to talk about?

2nd student: Sir, I cannot manage to pay school fees on my own because I am not working anywhere, and I cannot do piece jobs and marriage to pay school fees for myself. My father is the only one who pays school fees for me, but the thing is, can I tell my father to protect himself from moving with other women apart from my mother? Can that be possible? Now if it will happen that my parents have died of AIDS, will I continue with school? Who will be paying fees for me? The second thing is, maybe I will get seriously sick within these four years of my education, and maybe I will be receiving injections. Nowadays people are getting AIDS through injections. Unfortunately, maybe I will be injected with that injection which the person with AIDS has also been injected using that same needle. Will I be alive in that way? Will my school be important to me? Many people now are mostly bewitching their friends, especially if they have

perhaps seen that someone is sick from diarrhea or coughing. Some people take the opportunity to bewitch those people who are already sick. They just add other diseases to him/her so that other people should not know that she/he is bewitched, they should just think that she/he has AIDS disease. I am very unhappy about today's world. Our parents were better, they did not face this bad life as we are doing in our generation.

Teacher: Aaa, don't worry about that. You never know anything [what will happen]. Maybe your parents will not die of AIDS because they are already old people and they are more intelligent than you are. They know what they are doing. They know that they have the large job of looking for your better future. They also need life as you do. Don't think that they are dull or they are useless to you. You have also talked about the injections at the hospital. Don't be cheated, my boy. At the hospital, the health staff cannot use one needle for two patients. Never. Those people know the rules of their job and they know that there is AIDS the killer disease, and they also know that AIDS has no medicine. They cannot kill people deliberately. They know that many people are dying every day now. If they use one needle for two or more people, who will survive in this world then? Where will they be working since they are the health staff because there are patients who were admitted to the hospital, and even out-patients? No patients, no job for them, therefore they cannot kill patients deliberately. It just happens that many people are now dying of many diseases and AIDS. What you should do is to protect yourself from having girl friends and work hard in class. That will be your good future.

1st student: If one was born to die while at school, then it will happen even if there is no AIDS. You can die of any other disease if the time comes for you to die. But you should not stop making your bright future because you never know. Maybe you will just waste your time thinking that everyone will die of AIDS in the next five years, but you will just regret that many people are still alive. Just put your heart on school and don't think about many things though the world is very bad. We all know that nobody knows when they will die but we should still work hard since we never know about or future as to what Sir has said.

2nd student: O.k., let us just pray that God should forgive us if we are wrong and he shouldn't destroy the whole world in that way. It is better to finish off the whole world at once than killing people one by one as it is.

Teacher: God knows what he is doing since we are his people. Maybe we are doing wrong to him and he is punishing us one by one or he is not the one sending that AIDS disease. Maybe a Satan is the owner of that AIDS.

2nd student: O.k. sir, we are getting home and we hope to meet again at afternoon classes.

Teacher: O.k.

Now the teacher began to tell me what he was talking about with his students.

Teacher: Madam, have you heard what my students were talking about?

Alice: Though I found you had already begun talking, I have heard what you were saying.

Teacher: Students are crying. They fear that AIDS will kill them and school will not help them. They just think that maybe their parents can die of AIDS and therefore they won't finish learning since nobody will pay fees for them.

Alice: Everyone is in a great fear of AIDS. AIDS is a great killer, and even a child of 5 years old knows that there is AIDS, a killer disease. God knows that some people will not die of it, especially those who are 5 to 10 years old who can live for a long time if they follow what their parents will be telling them—that they shouldn't have sex with anyone if they grow up, and if they grow up and maybe they will be unable to stay without sex, they should always use condoms. If they will manage to follow those instructions, I think they will never get AIDS.

Teacher: The world of our generation is very bad. You know, Madam, sex is nature, and nobody can manage to stay for his/her whole life without it, unless you were born unfertilized. There are some people who don't have sex, especially men. It is how they were born, but there are not many. It is also impossible to use condoms for the whole of your life when having sex. The danger is you can go for a blood test with your partner and maybe the doctors will tell you that you are both well, nobody [neither of you] is HIV positive. Still, you cannot depend on each other. You will have sex without condoms because you both know that you are well, but the time comes when one of you begins having sex with other partners, outside, secretly. You never know that your partner has someone she/he is sleeping with, and maybe without using a condom. Unfortunately you will just see that one of you is coughing, vomiting, fever and maybe frequent diarrhea. When you go to the hospital, they just tell you that your partner has AIDS. So have you protected

yourself? You just know that you shall also die of AIDS, and if there is a child who you are breast-feeding, she/he will also die. That is why people are saying that nobody will survive from AIDS. Nobody is 100% protected from AIDS unless you just stay without sex from birth, for the whole of your life.

Alice: Hiii, anyway, let us be waiting for the death which God has sent to us.

Teacher: Bye.

Alice: Bye.

Three days later, on Sunday, I went to the church where I pray. We had visitors from other CCAP [Presbyterian] prayer houses who came to preach about AIDS since the Government has asked the Church elders to tell their Christians about the dangers of AIDS. After the prayers ended, one of the visitors, Mr. Anusa, stood up and said to the Christians:

Anusa: In the name of God, I am here to tell you, my fellow Christians, about the dangers of AIDS. In the past there were diseases which people were suffering from, and those diseases were not dangerous because people were able to heal their patients since medicines were there and even herbs were healing them. But to our generation nothing is good since we have this well-known dangerous disease AIDS. My fellow Christians, nobody can work while sick and nobody can go for prayers while sick. Therefore the Government is asking all Christians to protect themselves from that dangerous disease AIDS. Even in the Bible, promiscuity (*chimwerewere*) is forbidden. A good Christian must not do *chimwerewere*. Please let us depend on our husbands/wives. For you who have not yet married, please look after yourselves. Protect yourselves from getting AIDS. The Government is saying that if one thinks that he/she cannot manage to stay without sex that one should always use condoms. But unfortunately Christians are not allowed to use condoms. That is strictly forbidden, because God did not create condoms for people to use during sex and there is nowhere in the Bible which he wrote that people should use protection in their houses. Adam and Heva did not use any protection. Had it been that there was a protection that they used, we wouldn't have been born. But they were just sleeping and bearing children. Now before I proceed, maybe there is someone who has something to add or ask. This is their time.

1st Christian: Isn't there any other protection apart from using condoms which the Government can tell us to follow, since condoms are forbidden to Christians and it is impossible for one to stay without sex in his/her house. Those who are not married also need to have sex, because it's nature.

Anusa: The well known methods to avoid AIDS are to force yourself not to do sex and doing sex using condoms. If there are other important methods apart from those two then I never heard. But there are also other methods which they say we should not use, one needle for two or many people for injections, don't borrow each other's razor blade and other minor ways. But the most important ways are using condoms or don't even do sex at all.

2nd Christian: Aaa, then we shall all be sisters and brothers. We shall all pray in one church, the Roman Catholic Church, because it's where brothers and sisters are found.

3rd Christian: Maybe the Italians took this disease from their country in Rome and spread it here deliberately so that people should all follow them and pray in their church since they are those people who have brothers and sisters. They need us to follow them, so we should all all be brothers and sisters. How do you look at it, our church elders?

Anusa: No, don't think these things. Those people were also created like us. They have no right to create a disease or buy it from someone. They don't force anyone to follow them in their church. Those who need to follow them, they do so, but those who dislike their prayers they don't follow them. We all just see that there is this disease AIDS, but nobody knows where it came from. Most of us are wondering where did the government hear about the word AIDS? Which country named that disease AIDS? How did they decide to call it AIDS? Who was the first person to suffer from AIDS, and where? How did AIDS begin in people? Many people have questions about that dangerous disease, but nobody has the answers. We should just protect our lives. The other thing is family planning. The government is also asking people to use family planning in order to give our wives enough time to rest and look after the child who is young. In addition to that, things are expensive nowadays, therefore it is difficult for one to buy clothes and food for many people at once. Our wives should also be healthy for them to do the church jobs and for them to have time to spread the word of God properly. There are many ways to do family planning, like using condoms, but it's forbidden as I have said. There is using pills, those are women only, there are injections, for women also, using the loop and there is a small operation for men so that they should cut the way of passing the sperm. A man should just stop bearing, they say so.

3rd Christian: That cannot be possible for all the people. Those who are interested can do it, but that is against God's rules. People are against God. He will just destroy his world and that is why he has sent AIDS. But I cannot follow those methods. For me it will be up to God.

Attached to the diary was an editorial from the Chronicle, "AIDS & Prevention". The date was cut off, except for 2001; it's p. 6. "For too long we have deliberately avoided addressing the real matter of the HIV/AIDS scourge in Malawi. Whatever has been done to expose the pandemic although commendable has not been adequate. Now, it is heartening to see that the State has taken the issue and made it a matter of real national concern. The State has now taken the initiative of bringing the Faith Communities into the fight against this war."

Alice did not date any of these events, though the time between them is given. When I saw her in June, she said Meda died in late December or early January. At that time, I also asked her to describe the people she talked with so I could imagine them. Although some of the interactions occurred more than six months ago, she described each without hesitation. The only people she had known previously besides her cousin Meda were the two prostitutes and the schoolteacher.

The "Hospital Man": How was he dressed? "He was well dressed, he wore a white shirt, black trousers with a jacket but it was brown". I asked if he had education, she said "Aah, not really much education", her guess is that he had only some primary school.

The "Lilongwe Man": How was he dressed? "He had no jacket, a brown shirt and brown trousers, black shoes, hat." Education? "That one should be well educated I think so", when I asked what that meant she said secondary school.

The woman she met after leaving Meda who was probing why Meda was so thin: By this time Alice knew I would ask about dress and education, and she began with education. "She was not a well-educated woman, she wore a colored blouse, skirt, green, sandals, *chitenge*." When I asked whether the woman had some primary school, she said "Ah no primary school"; when I asked whether the woman was a neighbor, she said no, she was "probably looking after her relative at the hospital." I said this woman clearly thought Meda had AIDS, she asked why Meda was "thinner and thinner", Alice knew, why didn't she say it was AIDS? "We villagers, we don't reveal, other people may laugh, they may say maybe they were promiscuous."

Woman on the bus ("2nd woman"): "She was wearing a yellow dress, no *chitenge* but shoes, red. She had a baby on her back. She was not well educated", I asked if some primary, she said if she had primary, it was no further than standard 3 or standard 2.

Old man on the bus: He was well dressed, a jersey on top. "He went to school, that one", she guessed up to Standard 5, 6 or 7.

Prostitute Timu: short skirt, whitish, with a green blouse, a hat, shoes, "and a wristwatch, it was somebody else's". I asked how she knew that, she said "it's a large watch, a man's, we women put on small watches."

Prostitute Abiti: Long skirt (knee length), red and black, with a white blouse and a *skumba* [a light weight ski jacket], shoes, "curled hair."

Women at the funeral:

#1: No shoes, green dress and *chitenge*, head scarf. No education, not even primary.

#2: Blue blouse, red skirt, *chitenge*, shoes, "she was showing a bit more education". I asked whether upper primary, she said "Ah, not 5, maybe Standard 3 or 4."

#3: "this one was well educated. Shoes, *skumba*, green skirt, *chitenge*." I asked how she knew she was well-educated, Alice said the woman was "sometimes talking English and showing intelligence, this one can know something."

Men at the funeral:

#1: Brown trousers, white shirt, black shoes, "that one was educated." I asked how she knew that: "I heard someone say he was working somewhere else, he was just visiting back in the village, it should be secondary because he is working somewhere."

#2: Educated but not secondary. Green trousers, brown shoes, white shirt.

School teacher: Alice said several times she knows this man well. He's a primary school teacher, was educated to Form 2, the students (turns out they were boys) were in Standard 7, Standard 8. Since the

students were worried about school fees, I asked why, since they were in primary which is free. She said it would be if they went to secondary school, then there would be fees. At the beginning of the segment with the teacher and students, she was walking with them, “just listening” but not saying anything, then when the students left she and the teacher continued the conversation.

Church: I asked if there were conversations about the questions re condoms after the church service, she said no, everyone just went home.

Alice: she is 30, short, dark, short hair, a Yao, usually wearing a skirt, shirt and bulky sweater or a light ski-jacket (we are always here in the Malawi winter). Both parents are dead. Education through Form 4. She was an interviewer in our project in 1998, did very well, we hired her as one of the ethnographers in 1999, when again she did very well. She also worked for Enid Shatz, Linda Tawfik and Angela Chimwaza, all graduate students doing field work at Penn, and is now working for Amy Kaler. In 1999, her husband had died, and she had a small baby. When I saw her in February, she had remarried. I learned from Angela in June that the 2nd husband was a scoundrel, and figured she must have been herself very worried about being HIV positive from the second husband, I don't know what the 1st husband died from. But “The Story of AIDS” surely has very personal meaning for her. She is pregnant now, says she wants to get tested when she delivers the baby. I asked if she was brave enough for that, she said “I am, I want to know where I am.”

Other notes:

I had advanced her money for a computer course, to be paid from her earnings. She said that when she paid me back there wouldn't be anything to live on, could I find her other work. She said there are 10 people depending on what she makes, including herself, her mother is dead (she didn't mention her father). Her three children (and she is pregnant now), her sister with 3 children, her brother who is in Standard 8, and now the person looking after her children while she is working. She said it was too much, she needed to earn money until we came back again next year. I said she couldn't depend on that, as we didn't know whether we would be coming back next year, which was obviously worrisome to her.

She said she is pregnant now. She reminded me that when I had been there with Angela in February I had asked her if she wanted more children with the new husband and she had said no, I had told her if she didn't use family planning she would have a child. She now said that when she did go and get the injection her period didn't come, it turned out she was already pregnant. She asked for an abortion, the clinic referred her to Banja, but because she was working for Angela it didn't happen. When she I asked her whether she wanted to marry again, she said “No”, quite forcefully. She said she wanted to keep on learning the computer, she doesn't want a husband, “aah no!”

I asked if the new baby was with her second husband, the one she was married to when we were here February, it is. Then she told me that she had told that husband to go. When I asked why, she said when she was in Blantyre working for Angela, she got a telephone call from her sister who said the husband had tried to rape a girl, so she went home and told him to leave. I asked whether she worried that she might have gotten AIDS from him, she said “Of course, if he can do that, he might have done things before.” She said when the baby was delivered she would get tested, she wanted to know. I asked was she brave enough for that, she said “Yes, I want to know where I am.”

I asked if she'd type a paragraph for me. She knows Word Perfect 95, but her typing is hunt-and-peck, at the course she took they said there was another course for touch-typing, she said she wanted to take that and maybe get a diploma. I told her she could practice just with a piece of cardboard or paper, so we wrote out the QWERTY keyboard so she could memorize it. I'd like to see if she can help out with data entry, but she'll have to be faster.