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### 10<sup>th</sup> June 2002

Today my in-law named Myrtle, a young sister to my wife, came to visit us at home and to chat with us. She stays at M\_\_\_ village together with her husband. She was born, I was told by my wife, in 1986, and is married since February 2002. She came around 10a.m. and we were chatting about various issues until she remembered to tell us about the incident which just happened at M\_\_\_ village the last night before she visited us today (meaning yesterday).

She said a certain woman was caught doing adultery with a certain man who came to her home to drink *kachaso* beer. The woman brews beer, she is married but her husband is a businessman who goes to the lake to buy fish and sell them be in markets. My in-law said that when the husband goes to the lake for his business he spends weeks, even a month, before returning home and his wife, when she stays home she runs a *kachaso* business and to say the truth this business helps her a lot and a lot of men come there to drink beer, even late at night. She said they live close to each other and indeed she is the in-laws' neighbor. In-law was saying that the man caught was her neighbor's sexual partner for it was like this: The man came together with his friends, two of them, making three in total. They came at 4p.m. and they were heavily taking beer. Some of their other friends got drunk and went to their houses, but these three were still drinking. This man agreed with the owner of the beer [place] that they would go inside her house so as to chat about doing sex there. His friends were outside the house drinking and could know what was going on inside the house. We were laughing as she (the in-law) was presenting the issue, she was laughing too. My in-law said that when they were at high climax, unfortunately the owner of the house came from his business and it was indeed late evening. The house had no windows and no other door for the sexual partner to run away. (We were laughing). And my in-law reported that unfortunately those who were outside drinking were drunk indeed and could [not] take this owner of the house as he came for beer. He, the owner of the wife, came straight through the thatch fence around this house and knocked at the door. One of the men drinking beer there, the friend to the sexual partner who was doing sex with the married woman, shouted at him saying 'You must sit down and if you come here to drink somewhere, it's better that you should be going home to sleep. The owner is coming shortly, she is chatting with visitors inside and if you want beer come out! You can be sharing this one with us.' The owner continued knocking, he never said anything at all.

Then the man inside begun shouting as well, maybe because he was also drunk and didn't know that it was the husband to his sexual partner. Then in-law said 'Then a sister of the woman, who lived in the next house, came to see the cause of the shouting.' She was the one who recognized the husband, and as soon as he was recognized he became very furious and said 'I always said that your sister is a prostitute. Look! What does she do when I am away? And in law said that 'My husband and I, we ran to see because there was much shouting. My husband and I, we ran to see for the shoutings were much. The owner of the house began beating the other men who he found drinking there – the friends to the man inside and the friends ran away. Then he began fighting the man who was doing sex with his spouse right inside his house.' And the in-law reported that because their friend was indeed drunk he could not fight back, and the wife was just crying. [She said that] 'The man, her other sexual partner, lay on the ground bloody and having difficulty breathing. The man was furious at being touched and threatens that if he is touched [again] he would make an accident. No sooner had he finished talking than he set the house on fire. He burned it deliberately. Luckily some people around could rescue some of the properties like clothes and a few maize cobs kept inside the house that they were waiting to shell and put in sacks. My husband was among the rescuers.' And my wife asked: 'Your husband was not afraid of the fire and being involved in a case like that which was not his concern?' The in-law said ' No! At accidents, measures to address the situation must be undertaken. I agreed with the in-law and I congratulated the man (her husband) for his courage rescuing.

And my in-law said ‘But many of the properties like plates, a lot of maize cobs, blankets, all burned up. (We felt sorry).

I asked ‘Is this house his real own house or the wife’s home?’ [This is a matrilocal area] In-law answered that it is the wife’s home. And I asked where men, probably relatives to the wife, may catch him and make him behave like a man? In-law said, but with a light laugh ‘In-law, you know the compound! It is called Jailosi’s compound where *Kachaso* is brewed almost daily.’ I know the place now after she named the name– Jailosi is a fellow about my age, his profession is only weaving palm-leaf hats. Indeed the description of this compound is based on saying his name, one can be directed to the compound if only this name is mentioned. There are only women and young boys there and this Chiyero, who has just come along. My wife recognized the place as well, laughing as she added ‘where can we find many paw-paw trees?’ We both laughed and said there indeed. And my in-law concluded saying: “And with his fearless threats no-one was able to control him. You know, in-law, in such a condition it’s dangerous, even if it happens to you.’ And I said ‘Indeed and I can do what he has done.’

My wife and in-law laughed and my wife said ‘It is therefore better just to kill me than be burning houses, or rather divorce me. He has found me alone living with parents [and he can leave me here] rather than burning houses around the compound, because the thatch houses we build here are always close together with fences of thatch as well. It is possible that if one house is burning the result is all the houses in the compound will burn as well. Did other houses not burn?’ My in-law answered that no, only their house was burnt and people around who came quickly managed to make sure that the fire was to be controlled and did make sure by separating the jointed fences – ‘there were young men who were just flying with kicks and destroying the fences.’ My in law concluded like that.

And I went back to what she said, that ‘it’s better to kill me or rather divorce me than burning houses!’ And asked her: If such a thing happened to us! Should I really kill you?’ And I asked again to in-law: “Was the woman this time around?” [?] The in-law answered that ‘She is just talking [like that] because she is drunk with *nsima*.’ In-law added, ‘This time, you can be always crying, for instance when men are fighting like what was happening there.’ Then my wife agreed by laughing and said that ‘Indeed there is nothing more fearful and dangerous than AIDS and when men are fighting’, because, she said, she saw in Salima when she was young at least 5 men fighting at a certain bottle store because of the prostitute (*Hule Wa M’ Bottlestore* [*Hule* is prostitute, *Bottlestore* was in English]). Each of them had a sharp knife in his hand until one was knifed in the throat and the man died right there, and she concluded saying ‘Ever since that time ‘till now, whenever men are fighting I don’t attempt to come close and watch because of that incident I saw a long time ago.’

And I asked, ‘Why are you afraid of AIDS?’ My in-law said she is afraid of AIDS and ‘not HIV/AIDS as you say.’ I laughed and said but ‘but do these differ?’ In-law said yes, they differ greatly, and went on saying that ‘HIV/AIDS, these are abbreviations, HIV stands for Human Immune Virus whereas AIDS stands for Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome.’ I congratulated my in-law for the translation of the abbreviated words and I said ‘She indeed managed to teach [reach?] standard 8 (primary last level).’ We laughed and laughed and I at last I said ‘Indeed, but I believe the common feature in this disease is that even by just looking upon the abbreviated words you see that there is an ‘I’ between.’ (I wrote down the words and demonstrated the “I”). And I said which means the same. We laughed and agreed that is true.

Then my wife asked, ‘Where is the case now?’ My in-law asked, ‘Which case, for we are mixing our conversations, going this way talking about AIDS, talking about the incident I am reporting, then talking about fights and the life! Which case?’ My wife said ‘The case you are reporting to us, what happened to the man who was beaten?’ Myrtle (my in-law) said ‘The man was taken that same night to Chief M\_\_\_, where he slept waiting for tomorrow’s criticisms’ (meaning today). And I asked, ‘What happened to the woman then?’ My in-law said ‘The woman was nowhere to be seen – she was hidden somewhere among the her family members, who took her and told her to hide.’ And I asked, ‘You remember you said the house had no windows nor another door, so from where did the woman come out from the house without being beaten by her husband since he stood right there at the same one door?’ In-law said ‘She managed to come out using the same door but together with the man whom she had been doing sex with (her partner). When the husband saw both of them coming, he only thought to deal first with the man. And then I asked,

‘What happened then this morning pertaining to this incident?’ In-law said, ‘This morning we just heard that the husband to the wife has been packing up his belongings to go home, but the *ankhoswe* pleaded with him not to go too fast and said they [the *ankhoswe*] were told by his spouse that her husband should forgive her. And indeed he is still there on the veranda of the burnt house, weaving mats’. In-law said she saw him, he looked like he had been drinking also. We laughed and my wife said maybe he has been given the beer by his in-laws to lower his temper, not to run blood. (The popular saying is *kuthamanlia magazi*, Chichewa, it means ‘not doing things fast and harsh but rather systematically). We laughed and my in-law said ‘But to say the truth, here in this world there is medicine, the herbs are working indeed. The way the man behaved last night I didn’t think that he could stay right there on the verandah, talking in a low voice. I can’t be sure how that came about! And I said, ‘And you think the marriage is going to continue?’ In-law said yes, the way I have seen it, it means the marriage is not going to end. The marriage is definitely going to continue.’

And I asked ‘And why you talking about herbs, medicine and marriage?’ She said ‘But in-law! Some things are very difficult to understand. Nowadays there is AIDS and people seem not to understand about it. Fancy, can a man nowadays really come to know that his spouse has another sexual partner who acts like her husband when her husband is away doing business and yet he continues his marriage with a prostitute woman like that one? It would have been better if she was not married, but a married one? It’s amazing! And a sin.’ And I asked, ‘Why a sin?’ She said ‘It’s a sin because the scriptures says when a man was made she [he?] was made asleep and God took one of his left ribs to make a woman for him who will help and please him, meaning one husband, one wife. God blesses this marriage, and there is no need to be double crossing each other, then that tends to be a sin.’ And I said ‘But the world is wonderful.’ She agreed, saying ‘Indeed the world is wonderful and in this case it’s not only love but also that a woman gave love medicine to a man which he took together with food, that is very difficult to end no matter what!’ She concluded like that. And I asked, ‘And the man didn’t mention anything that last night that he is going to divorce her because he fears disease?’ My in-law said, ‘Indeed he kept on saying that, even in the very early morning, past 2.a.m., for they didn’t even sleep until morning.’ And I asked ‘What kind of diseases did he keep mentioning?’ My in-law said, ‘I could only hear him saying that ‘I am going to leave you and I have divorced her right now. She has to continue living with her [other] husband [partner] because probably I am not suitable for her and she might give me AIDS!’’ And my in-law laughed and said, ‘I was laughing in my heart and found myself saying indeed they are not suiting each other.’ And I asked ‘Why?’ And she said, ‘Because the fact is that the wife is a beautiful one. She is short and plump and the black in her complexion adds her beauty indeed.’ And I said ‘That’s not enough with regards to AIDS, to die of AIDS because of her beauty? Why not divorce her?’ And finally my in-law said ‘Indeed, but there are few people nowadays who are thinking of AIDS being a great threat to their lives. If such a thing happens to her that her husband has caught her red handed [she should say] ‘I can’t trouble my self fighting with my fellow friend [the other woman] but rather I leave my husband in her hands and no more sleeping with me indeed.’ There is AIDS’, in-law stressed, ‘it’s better than you should divorce each other and live a spinster than die of AIDS. Nowadays life is to be specially looked after, it’s not better that you die because of a husband.’ And I commented saying, ‘Neither should a man die because of a woman, not so?’ In-law said indeed, it was the same. My wife then commented, saying ‘Its better indeed to live alone for you will be responsible of caring your own life.’ Then my wife went to the kitchen to prepare food. Then we chatted and Mum came to greet her for she had been away in the hills cutting down grasses for thatching her house. Then suddenly the issue changed to another different story until lunchtime.

### **10<sup>th</sup> June 2002**

Today on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2002 my friend named Banda came– he had gone for a while to N\_\_\_ to see his elder brother who was working as a teacher there. When he had been back for a few weeks he wanted to visit me before the ‘change’ he had become all used up. He came very early in the morning and found me digging my groundnuts in the very small plot I had tried to plant (less than a quarter acre). We lunched together at home and chatted a bit, and it was past 3 p.m. that I escorted him. Banda is my good friend, he said ‘We have to go for beer pleasure when we arrive at the market.’ Having stayed for a long time without a drink, I accepted his offer, and we went to Chibuku beer within the trading and specifically we went to Balalika’

family where Chibuku beer is sold. We were drinking and drinking until a certain friend from Balalika' family came and joined us bringing his own beer, and we were chatting indeed.

During the course of our chatting a certain lady came who wanted groceries from this place – for they combine selling beer and groceries also. I know the lady as Mrs. Bikhwa, a Health Surveillance Assistant,<sup>1</sup> not married but has one daughter. We belong together to C.C.A.P. domination and of course she is my agemate. When she was buying, Banda began talking about her health status and said 'I am wondering, where did this woman's health status go as compared to the way she was when she came from B\_\_\_ [town] where she was working and staying?' And a friend who had joined us from the Balalika family, named Mdoka, said 'I had been going with her from the time she just came here. She had a very admirable healthy body status for a solid year. I believe [?] and I had dropped her. But indeed she is not looking healthy nowadays.' And I jumped into the conversation and I said 'Indeed I am noticing her change.' Mdoka said, 'She has AIDS, which she must have taken before me!' He added, 'I am lucky enough that now I am married and living now happily with my wife 'Mai Aleme' and we trust one another. We did the Catholic wedding together.' (NB- 'Mai Aleme Is the short form of Mai Alemekeze-ke-a name'.) And I asked, 'When was that?' He said 'I dropped her in 1998 and in 1999 I had my wedding with my spouse.' And I asked 'You married in 1999?' He said, 'I married in 1998, the same year after we [he and the HSA] had just divorced each other. To avoid the chance that I would think about her too much and considering life as it was then I just decided to take this one who was also my fiancé ever since I began schooling.' Mdoka did form 4 and is a primary teacher now. His wife did education as well, probably form 4 (I am not sure, maybe form 2).

Then luckily enough, after she had seen us drinking the woman buying groceries bought herself 2 packets of Chibuku beer and came straight to a round summer hut where we sat drinking and chatting. She greeted us all and surrendered the 2 packets she bought to us and we thanked her. She didn't stay long and off she went. My friend asked, 'why did he leave such a kind, generous and beautiful black woman?' Mdoka laughed and said 'Indeed she is beautiful but to me her beauty means nothing – I had 'went into' her, I knew her from A to Z. (He said 'went into' her meaning "having sex"). And friend Banda said 'What one despises is the same thing another one is cares for.' And Mdoka opened saying that he had dropped her because that time he knew that she had a previous sexual partner in B\_\_\_ where she was staying and working. He added 'her friend told me this and I was going with her secretly as well while I was with her friend also. I was combining them, Mrs. Jasment was a school teacher, a friend to her (the Health Surveillance Assistant). We laughed and said 'You were eating well' – and he agreed and said 'But I am happy indeed that I dropped such a bad heart.' And I asked, 'Her friend told you she had another partner and you dropped her?' He said 'Yes indeed and "I went into" her friend Mrs. Jasment a school teacher that time for few months and I dropped her as well because both of them seem to have partners. For example Mrs. Jasment was going with a truck driver and I could see the truck driver sometimes coming to her work at school and she was only cheating me that he (the driver) was her uncle until I quietly came to know the reality, that he was not her relative as she was saying but rather her sexual partner. I just wrote a letter and off we divorced. And about this woman (health surveillance) she doesn't understand even now why she was dropped. She was giving me her salary, sometimes ½ of her salary, indeed it was like a marriage kind of love. People could say I married her! But after I was told and one day I saw a new snapshot of a certain policeman in his uniform which she placed at the head of her bed and we quarreled over it and I definitely tore the snapshot into pieces and the same night I moved from her house regardless of comfortations [her comforts?] She tried to get me to understand and forgive her but I did not return and we are still divorced.' Banda said 'It's lucky you were fed up sleeping with her by this time, not so? (meaning the Health Surveillance Assistant). Mdoka answered 'Yes indeed, but she will never have another child. She has one child. These Health Surveillance Assistants, especially women who are not married, are fond of taking family planning methods and experimenting with them by having partners around.' I exclaimed! 'Indeed? They experiment without using a condom?' Mdoka said 'Yes indeed without using condoms, for they really trust their medicine, they are professionals. I could have given her another child because when I first knew her I had sex with her almost daily and indeed she was a sweet woman, that even though I dropped her sometimes she comes into my feelings and had it been that she still looked nice and health, I could even use a condom with her one day!' We laughed and laughed. I asked, 'Could you really have used a

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<sup>1</sup> Health Surveillance Assistants are the lowest level of health personnel.

condom?’ He said ‘Yes indeed because she could have been provoking me like this’ (giving offerings like this Chibuku.) And we laughed and chatted.

Then I asked why had he just rushed blood and divorced her after seeing the photo? Mdoka said ‘It’s because I know policemen. One thing is that they go for many sexual partners and are the main kind of people who have a high percentage of AIDS infection, and another thing is that it’s not good to be competing with a policeman, he may find a very minute reason in order to arrest you.’ We agreed with him. And he finally said ‘Mainly it was AIDS that made me divorce her and even her friend the school teacher, as you all know truck drivers are also leading to this problem of AIDS infection. And also the Malawi soldiers, they come first, seconded by policemen and truck drivers. And therefore I thought not to die of AIDS because of a “small place” like that kind.’ We were laughing. (He said *Malo aug’ono ng’ono* (Chichewa) which probably means ‘vagina’). And we congratulated him for this reasoning. And indeed we had been drinking – and I asked, ‘Why you didn’t try to forgive her instead of divorcing her and be just using condoms?’ He said ‘It is very risky to be using a condom with someone you really love because you can be tempted one day by Satan, that one day you won’t use and therefore you’ll contract AIDS. As I said, she’s a very sweet girl and I couldn’t resist many days, say when I am drunk I could have may be decided to not use a condom and I could catch this disease. She is getting thin of AIDS nowadays.’ And Banda asked: “And you don’t have any more sexual partner now? Mdoka answered, ‘I don’t have any except my own spouse I am living with and now I don’t think I will have another one ruining a friendship [marriage?] for me, there is AIDS and I believe that people are dying with it. I was having partners when I was not married because I wanted sex and now I am married, living with a wife, and whenever I want to have sex I just ask my wife and she shares with me, why look for others? And when you catch AIDS there who are you to blame? Girls or rather women are the same, so we should learn to be satisfied with what we have.’ We agreed with him.

We chatted and chatted until another friend named Everson M. joined us drinking (the story about ladies we stopped after the arrival of Everson). We chatted a bit then we separated. Banda and I separated inside the market around 6 o’ clock pm. I went home and had supper and slept. And at around midnight I woke up and begun writing about this story up to about 2a.m. today on 11/06/02 [June 11, 2002].