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## 12 September 2003

After finishing writing exams, that was on 6<sup>th</sup> June (if not 7<sup>th</sup> June) I went back to Lilongwe to join Nelie whom I was working with in a newspaper project. I arrived in Lilongwe late in the afternoon and I just thought of meeting her the following day. The following morning, (I have forgotten a date but I remember it was a Monday) I went straight to the Library where we were working from. Nelie introduced the work for that morning to me which needed me, carrying the bound Volumes of newspapers for photocopying.

Xerox Company's offices were designed in a way to give their staff good ventilation. They have got very big windows with translucent glass, (the glass which when you're inside the building you are able to see everything outside but the one outside can not see inside) and when we got into the photocopying room, I sat on an empty crate of soft drinks facing the photocopier machine while showing my back to the big glass that was behind me. Clifford stood on the other side of the photocopier facing me and the window. This was the place when he was very free to chat me and he started asking my name. I told him and he again asked me why I was not showing up the week before, and I told him that I went back to Blantyre to write exams. (Since I joined Nelie in May before our exams, I went back to Blantyre to write the exams and when I finished I went back to Lilongwe to join Nelie)

"Are you at school?" Clifford asked me.

"Yes" I responded.

"Where?" he again asked.

"At MCA" I said.

"Oh at Malawi College of Accountancy?"

"Yes," I said.

"So how did you know that white lady you are working with?" (When we were chatting, the work was still in progress. We were chatting while he was working.)

"I knew them in 1998" I responded.

"Yes, but how?" Clifford continued.

I then started telling him everything. I started by telling him that Nelie was just a student. She had been sent by a certain professor from the University of Pennsylvania. (I did not mention Susan's name). That professor is the one I know, the one who is paying for my school fees. Before I went on explaining, he cut me short.

"Ooh is that professor paying fees for you?"

"Yes," I replied.

"From America?"

"Yes"

"Eehh, you must be very lucky and he continued "but you haven't answered my question."

"What is it?"I asked.

"I said how did you know these people?"

"Okay,"I started, "these people, especially the Professor I am talking about came here in 1998. This young lady was not there (I was referring to Nelie). They came in our area, Yelewa, where I come from, to do research on HIV/AIDS. They then advertised job vacancies for enumerators to carry out the job and I also applied and I got the job. It was on contract basis. And since that time they have been coming each and every year,"I stopped.

"So when they come, do they look for new enumerators or they just pick those who have worked before?"he asked.

"No, they do employ others who are new,"I replied.

"So, how can I get in touch with them?"

I laughed and he also laughed, and before I answered his question, we heard someone shouting his name. He went there and came back with a book that he was instructed to photocopy after finishing our job. When he came back, before continuing with our conversation, he saw a woman walking outside the office.

He started "that woman (while pointing) is coming here" I turned to look at the woman he was referring to. "She is coming to collect those things" pointing at a heap of photocopied book, "and when she comes, carefully look at her, she is a very good lady with nice hips," This time, he was whispering. "Even the legs, she has got very nice ones, very appetizing." (KUUTSA MADYO. He said that word in Chichewa which has been translated in the underlined word).

And when the woman came I really looked at her very carefully and indeed she was good. She did not stay long, she just asked for her things and left. And when she left, Clifford continued "Have you seen her?"

"Yes,"I replied.

"Suppose you propose her and she says yes, can you think of using these widely publicized plastics?"

"Eeh?"that was what I said because I did not catch exactly what he meant.

"Can you think of using condoms?"I did not answer anything, instead I was busy checking the pages of the photocopied articles.

"Is there any mistake?" Clifford asked after seeing that my concentration was now at the papers. He photocopied twice an article which he had already photocopied so I thought that may be he had skipped others. But when I carefully looked at them, it was okay.

"Oh no, in fact I was looking at these papers. You have photocopied them twice,"I said.

"Okay, just throw the other away,"he said and then he went back to the story, this time, he just asked "do you believe that condoms work effectively?"

"No, condoms don't work effectively but it is the person using the condoms who can make them work effectively. Suppose you put on a condom without following instructions, do you think it can work?"I asked him. Before he answered, he just looked at me while smiling, then he said "very clever answer,"and we all laughed.

"But,"he continued, "I heard someone saying that where you keep on using condoms for a long time, you suffer from TB, is that true?"He asked.

"Aaah no, I have never heard those rumours, may be its true, but I don't know."I said.

"Michael,"this time the conversation was so friendly that we started calling each other's name. "Yes,"I answered. "You said you have been working with those people since 1998? "Yes,"I replied.

"Asking about AIDS all these years?"

"Yes, but we have also been asking about other things as well, like things about marriages and how divorce happen but our main focus was on AIDS,"I replied.

"I see that's why your answers are always against my opinion."

"What do you mean Clifford?"

"I mean to say that with all those years working on HIV/AIDS, you seem to know a lot on HIV/AIDS. You really know what is right and what is wrong about AIDS,"he said.

"No, Clifford. It doesn't mean that I know anything about AIDS, no and after all when we are in the field, we ask people what they know about AIDS. In fact, it is us who learn from the people when they tell us about their experience and what they know. The same with you, you can also teach me what you know about AIDS, like the way you have done about condoms."

"Condoms?"he asked.

"Yes, remember that you said prolonged use of condoms can cause TB?"

"Ooh, that was a question about what I heard,"he said.

"Yes, you can also tell me about what you heard about AIDS,"I said to him. This time, we all smiled and Clifford said "Michael, I don't believe that AIDS exist."

"Mmh?"(I responded in this way to make him talk more)

"Yes, I agree with the President of South Africa, Mr. Mbeki that AIDS is poverty. Go in hospitals, you will find that the so called AIDS patients are the people who are very poor,"he concluded. And before I could answer, he asked "haven't you experienced that Michael?"

"I think you are right because even myself, I have seen only few rich people die of what people said was AIDS"I responded him in that way just boost his effort.

"But with me Michael, I don't believe that AIDS exist. Even if the President arrive to my house to tell me about AIDS, I will not believe in that."

The conversation could have continued but it was approaching lunch time so I had to leave to meet with Nelie and go for lunch.

"Michael are you coming again this afternoon?"

"Yes just to check if you have finished photocopying that book."

"Okay, I will do it first after lunch, don't worry."

I then left the place for lunch.

### **12 September 2003**

Either on 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> June (I'm not sure), I was outside the Lilongwe Library waiting for its opening hours so that we should start working. Normally, its opening hours are from 9.00 o'clock in the morning up to 5:30 p.m. Now, on that particular day, I came very much earlier than the other days before. By eight o'clock, I was already there at the Library. During those months, between May to July, it has been a tendency that Libraries are always full with so many people coming to study.

My assumption is that most of the examining bodies use these months for their exams, that is why the Libraries are always full. I had that observation in Blantyre, and Lilongwe was no exception. I am saying this to mean that on that particular day, though I regarded myself as someone who has come early, I also found other people already there at the Library. There were a lot of them who sat on a ground planted with (KAPINGA) grass. (Grass like that planted on football pitches, we call it KAPINGA in Chichewa)

The sun was shining as usual and these people sat there because there was no disturbances from the sun's heat. They were warming themselves as you know Professor that we experience a cold weather during these months. I also joined them, and I sat near three girls and a boy. The boy was studying accounting because of the books that he took. They were similar to the books that I have been using. I don't know about the girls. I can only describe the girls by what they put on [wore] that particular day. They all put on pair of trousers with the first girl putting on a leather jacket.

The second girl has a T-shirt on written CRELLOM and the third girl has a see-through blouse on which exposed her white bra. It puzzled me because cold as that day was, I did not expect someone to just put on a T-shirt or a see-through blouse as these two girls did.

When I sat there, I greeted them, interrupting their conversation. At first I did not gather what they were talking about but later on I realized that they were talking about a girl who broke her friendship with one of the girls because she was selfish because I overheard one girl among the three saying "Kungo musiya osamunyengelera, onyada amene uja," Chichewa meaning "Just leave her, she is very selfish."

As the girls were discussing this, two people were coming from a distance walking hand in hand. But judging by the way they were walking, it easily showed that one of the two had difficulties to walk. As they were coming closer to where we got seated, I realized that they were a boy and a man. The boy seemed to be in his teens, his age did not exceed twenty but for the man, it was difficult to predict his age because of the illness. He looked young but he was old.

And before they passed by the place where I and the other people sat, they both stopped and the boy said "SANATSEKULETU." "They haven't opened."

"Let's try those offices," the man said while pointing to the British Council offices. They turned, facing the offices and started off. We did not know what they were looking for but judging by what I and the other people saw, we all thought that they were looking for a toilet.

Because when they turned towards the offices, the man exposed his wet trousers soiled by feces. The man had severe diarrhea and as they were struggling to walk towards the office, we were all silent, a dead silence. Nobody talked for a while. It was just automatic.

Looking at that man, it was no doubt that he had AIDS. His hair was pale, he has lost a lot of weight and he also had difficulties in walking showing that his legs were aching.

After the two had gone, but still could be seen from a distance, one of the girls among the three, the one who put on [wore] a leather jacket said "The other companies are very stubborn. That man may be going to the bank or some other offices to process his papers. When someone goes to those offices on behalf of

their sick relatives, they don't accept until the owner comes even if you tell them that the owner is sick, they don't listen can you see, it that good?"

Then the boy said that it is the banks who do that because they are after the signature of the person and they make sure that the person should sign while the officials are looking.

"But can't they change that policy? Is that good? The man has diarrhea which needs him to be at home to have easy access to the toilet,"the girl continued. The girl's face showed that she was really touched by what has happened. She really felt sorry for the man.

The boy, in a whisper said to the girls, "see, a 15 minute pleasure is giving him a long time suffering." "What did you say Tije?"the girl in a T-shirt asked him mentioning his name in the process. He was Tije (I don't know whether it was in short for Tijesi or it was just Tije).

"I said, can you see that man, a 15 minute pleasure is giving him long term troubles. He enjoyed somewhere but today he is suffering."

"Eeh Tije, can't you feel sorry for him? Why are you saying that?"the girl seemed to plead with Tije.

"Of course yes, I am sorry for him,"Tije answered.

"But why are you saying that?"the girl asked.

"We have to be open these days so that others should learn and start taking care of their lives properly. That man is gone. He has AIDS,"Tije said. "Of course yes he has AIDS, we all know that but why can't you just know that by yourself? Why are you publicizing like that? Do you want to tell us that we can't know, by looking at the person's symptoms that he/she has AIDS?"The girl in the leather jacket asked.

And before Tije answered, the girl who wore a see-through blouse for the first time said "Tije seem to be nursing hangovers. Can't you see him with his nonsense he is talking." They all laughed including myself and they seemed to be surprised that I was still there because they all turned looking at me.

"Is that nonsense Namadikira?"(I also learnt that the girl in see-through blouse was Namadikira.)

"Sure, that is,"Namadikira said as we were all standing up to get into the library which was about to be opened.

"No, that's nonsense. You know, it is lack of openness which is killing people. Suppose that the boy helping the man is not aware that the man is suffering from AIDS, is he not at risk?, eeh?.....

The story could have continued but it ended like that because we were all inside the Library for business.

### **23 September 2003**

On the same day, 15<sup>th</sup> June, I knocked off from work at half past four and not the usual five o'clock. I had complained to Nelie that whenever I knock off at five o'clock, I always reached where I was putting up myself very late in the night due to difficulties in getting transport since a lot of people from other offices knock off at five o'clock as well, thereby putting me at risk. Nelie accepted my request and I [started] to knock off at half past four.

When I arrived at the bus stage, there was a reasonable group of people who were also waiting for the buses from that end going to town. Surprisingly, the minibuses which were passing by were all full and a young boy carrying boiled eggs for sale said, "If you wait the buses from here, you won't board, there are a lot of people at capitol hill."(Capital hill is a location where government offices are located in Lilongwe's City Centre.)

The boy's message was very bad and clear and people started moving towards the capital hill so that they should have a chance of getting transport. I also started off but reluctantly because from that bus depot to capital hill, there is a considerable distance to walk and on that particular day, I was very tired. Walking reluctantly as I was, I just saw a gray Peugeot 505 Saloon Car picking up three men who were in front of me. At first, I thought it was their private car but as I was moving past the car which was now about to leave, I heard the driver saying "MWAISALA AMODZI A NTAWUNI" meaning there is one space remaining if you are going to town.

I did not bother asking how much it was because with minibuses, they charge K25 and I expected this car to be a bit expensive. I was wrong, I also paid the K25 fare.

Now when I got into the car, I was at the far end at the back seat. As soon as I got in, the man who was at the middle requested me to wind up the window. I did and one of these men again said to me, "but make sure that you leave a small space for air to get in." I did as instructed. As the car was moving, the man who sat at the front seat sat in the way that he should be easily talking to his friends who were at the back. He started by saying "Mr. Nyangulu, have you heard that Mr. Tambula has divorced his wife because she is giving birth to stillborn children?"

"When?" the man at the back who I believe was Mr. Nyangulu answered. "I don't know, but I heard this from my wife last weekend."

"So, does it mean Mr. Tambula has judged that it is the wife's fault to give birth to stillborn children?" Mr. Nyangulu asked.

"I don't know," the man in front answered. "But that's bad because as a man, you should just accept what God has prepared for you. And by divorcing the wife because of that, that's overreacting."

Mr. Nyangulu continued by saying that these days, when that happens, you should ask yourself a question, am I okay? Is my wife okay and if you don't find answers, go to MACRO (where they test blood for HIV) and get tested because sometimes, that may mean that the couple is infected with HIV.

At this point, the driver joined the conversation by saying "Yes, that's very true. I also heard that when a couple has AIDS, children die mysteriously and sometimes, especially in the villages, you may think that it's witchcraft.

"Does it need Mr. Tambula to go to MACRO to get tested for HIV?" the man who sat in front asked. And before Mr. Nyangulu who was conversing with that man answered, they both laughed and Mr. Nyangulu said "I don't know. Everything is there to show that he is not fit. Remember that his first wife passed away?" he asked.

"That's why I am saying, does he need to go to MACRO? Why can't he accept that he has AIDS and stop child bearing before he kills this wife. And thank God that he has divorced her while alive," he finished.

And the driver again joined the conversation by saying that there are still other people who are primitive who think that AIDS is witchcraft. They don't believe that it's real. "I think that's the duty of these NGOs (Non Governmental Organisations) to sensitize the people, otherwise, people will be just dying ignorantly."

This time the car was already in town and there were a lot of traffic which made the cars to make a very long queue.

"Just drop us here, not so Mr. Nyangulu?" the man in front said while pointing at the bus depot to Mushanga, a township to the west of Lilongwe.

"No problem," Mr. Nyangulu answered, and all the people who were in the car dropped here except for me who wanted to get dropped behind Lilongwe Market.

**4 October 2003**

"What Elemiya did is quite regrettable. He is still regretting up to now. You know, he is an assistant to the driver of his brother's truck...?"

"Yes," I replied.

"... right, so these people had a trip to Mulanje to deliver soya beans to a certain oil manufacturing company. While there, Elemiya found a girl whom he agreed to have sex with. Before everything, Elemiya had his senses to use a condom, and he said, he did put up one, but in the course of making love, when he felt really satisfied with the girls tactics of sexual intercourse, Elemiya felt like he will not enjoy to the maximum, with the condom that he put on. He then withdrew his member, stripped off the condom and went inside again, this time plain. There he is now suffering from buboes."

I cannot exactly remember the date but I only guess that it was on 24 June 2003 when I was at home in Blantyre. This was when Nelie had left for New York when I went back to Blantyre for a breather. Nelie left on 21<sup>st</sup> June, and I went to Blantyre 23<sup>rd</sup> June.

On that day, 24<sup>th</sup> June, while still in bed relaxing, I heard a knock at around 8 o'clock in the morning. I woke up reluctantly and headed for the door. The one knocking was Heneriko, my brother's friend who came to visit him. This time around, my brother was already away in town. I welcomed him in and offered him a seat while I was [brushing] my teeth. After I finished brushing the teeth, I then sat down and greeted him. He then asked me when I had come back from Lilongwe. (Being a frequent visitor to our home, he knew that I was in Lilongwe.)

I told him and he then went on asking me whether my brother was around or not. I told him that he had already gone in town. And before he left, we had a little chat. In the course of chatting, I was asking him about some of his friends as well as my brother's friends. I asked about Dzamkande, Kenneth, Victor and Elemiya, and there whereabouts. He replied by saying that Victor is at Monkey Bay and Kenneth went to his home to visit his parents. As for Dzamkande and Elemiya, he said they were still in town but went on to say that Elemiya is sick.

I asked him again what Elemiya was suffering from and he, before he could answer, started by saying "Eeeh, it's a dangerous disease."

I did not stop there, I again asked him to explain what he meant.

This time was when he started by saying that what Elemiya did was regrettable because when he went to Mulanje with the driver to offload soya beans, he found a girl with whom he had sex with. Now, because the girl was really an expert in sexual intercourse, Elemiya thought that he will not fully enjoy the exercise, instead, he thought of [taking] off the condom that he had already put on. He withdrew his member, pulled off the condom and continued the act, this time plain.

After the act, he felt satisfied without thinking of the consequences. "There he is suffering from buboes. He was telling me that yesterday when I visited him."

"But how did he explain that to his wife?" I asked.

"I don't know," Heneriko replied and continued, "It's just that the wife is good. Had it been like these other girls, they could have left him rotting."

"But is he getting medication?" I asked.

"Yes, he went to BANJA LA MTSOGLO and he was told to bring his wife and they are all getting treatment." Heneriko replied. (Banja la Mtsoglo is a private clinic which deals with family planning issues as well as treatment of STI and other illnesses.)

"So, the wife did not react in any way?"I asked.

"I don't know but Elemiya only told me that when he realized that he had buboes, he did not know how to explain to his wife."Said Heneriko.

"It means he was afraid of his wife?"I asked.

"Sure, he was but he can not tell us how she reacted,"he said.

Heneriko then looked at his watch and I also looked at mine, it was 8:57 a.m. and Heneriko said "Michael, I want to meet someone at the market at 9:30 a.m., so I have to go. When your brother comes, tell him that I will be at 'World Club'bar, he will get me there."(World Club is a famous bar in Dali township where most of the youths who drink beer do patronize.)

"Okay, I will do that,"I replied while escorting him.

#### **4 October 2003**

On my way going back to Lilongwe to continue Nelie's work on 25<sup>th</sup> June, I did not travel directly from Blantyre to Lilongwe as earlier planned, no. I first went home to visit my grandmother. While there, I met with my friend Shawn Mkwesalamba. We all live in Blantyre and he was also visiting his parents. In fact, I did not know that he was at home because when I was in Blantyre, I did not visit his home. All what I thought was that he was still in BT. And when we met on that day, he was very happy to see me because we had stayed for a long time without seeing each other.

I met Shawn, the moment I just dropped from the minibus that I boarded. We hugged each other and later on I told him that I will be seeing him soon because I wanted to hire a bicycle to carry me to home. He promised me that he will be waiting for me right away there at the trading centre. And when I reached home, I did not stay long. After exchanging greetings with everyone, I asked whether my bicycle was in condition. I was assured that it was in good condition and I instructed my sister to bring me. She did and I then headed for the trading centre cycling. I did find Shawn at the place he said I will find him.

"Lets go somewhere..."Shawn said "where?"I asked.

"Just sit here,"he said while pointing at the bicycle's carrier and this time he was already seated on the saddle. I did as he said and we started off going towards Nkhunda Bridge. Now as Shawn was cycling, he then started telling me that he was going to see his girlfriend who works at Vingula Catholic Mission as a cook.

He continued by telling me that when he came from Blantyre, he was told by his young brother that the girl has another partner, a Mr. Dimba who runs a maize mill at Vingula trading centre. He further said that when he heard that, he regretted for having sex with the girl the day before his brother told him that story.

I then asked him as to why he regretted, he then said that Mr. Dimba has lost two wives which people suspect that it was due to AIDS and he also felt insecure, but he continued by saying the he will not stop going out with the girl but instead he will be using condoms.

(When he was mentioning the condoms, he was busy dipping his hand into the pocket and he fished out a CHISHANGO CONDOM pack.)

"That's good idea,"I said but I then continued by asking him, "for how long will you be using the condoms?"

"Aaa, you know Michael that I only go out with this girl when I am here, so as long as I continue going out with her, I will be doing that," Shawn said.

This time Shawn turned to the right of the main road going towards a certain borehole in M'waniwa Village. "She said I will find her there at the borehole," Shawn said to me.

And when we reached at the borehole, we found a middle aged woman who was washing her clothes but the girl was not there. Shawn then asked the woman; "Odi!" Shawn said.

(ODI is an expression in vernacular which is like saying "Excuse me" in English.)

"Eehh," the woman responded.

"Ma'am, I wanted to ask," he said "go ahead, ooh you're looking for Paika..., she came here and she has since left for her home."

When the woman was saying this, Shawn was laughing because he said, he didn't know that the woman knew him as Paika's boyfriend. That woman happens to be Paika's neighbour.

"I know you," she said and continued "you are Paika's husband, right?"

"Aaah, no we are not yet married, she is just my girlfriend," Shawn replied.

"But why can't you just marry her, eeh? She is good you know?" the woman said.

This time Shawn just said "we will see in the future," while going back home.