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I: Welcome. Let us start. As a witch doctor what kind of illnesses do you treat or what kind of services do you offer to people?

R: The first thing I will do when you come to me, I will check what is troubling you. I am able to tell you the name of the person who has bewitched you, and you will know it's true. For instance, if it's someone who you are not in good terms with, I can tell you. I usually see the person in the mirror when the person is coming to bewitch you. I am able to tell the color of the door, I am not able to tell the date but I can tell the name and type of medication the person has used whether marine spirits or normal witchcraft. When we meet and agree, I ask for very little payment then I treat you, I give you medication you go and use, get healed and bring someone else another time.

I: Okay. Whatever problem a person has when he comes, are you able to assist?

R: Yes, we can assist if we see a problem, I usually use a mirror.

I: Have you ever treated an epileptic person?

R: We treat epilepsy, but the one we cannot deal with is the person who has fainted and gotten burnt. That one defeats us, I cannot treat, but for the person who has never gotten burned even if the person faints for two hours, we can treat. We give medication, that demon we treat with a cock. If it's being bewitched or probably is just being sick as long as we see the problem, the person can be healed.

I: How many epileptic cases have you treated?

R: There are many.

I: When did you start offering this service or how many years have you done this service?

R: I began in the year 1997, I was doing it at home but people started picking me to go with them in their homes like Konza. I go to Kisii, Ukambani and everywhere. I also treat homesteads.

I: You have offered this service for a long?

R: Yes, I have offered the service since that year.

I: Which other names are used to refer to epilepsy?

R: In our mother tongue?

I: Even in your mother tongue.

R: Epilepsy?

I: If someone wants to refer to epilepsy, which other name can they use?

R: It is fainting.

I: You can say fainting?

R: Yes, because that is something that happens when you are with a person, you just realize the person has fallen down.

I: According to you, what causes epilepsy?

R: I don't know much about what it is, but in our tradition we usually feel someone has a demon on their shadow.

I: Shadow?

R: Yes, it's a demon in a shadow that probably requires some traditions to be done or any other sickness that people don't know but mostly we view it as a certain demon.

I: Okay. The way you understand epilepsy, are there different types of epilepsy?

R: I had that epilepsy, as you can see the way my lips are, I used to faint as I had refused the witchdoctor work, my grandfather was the one who was a witch doctor. He gave it to me that star before he passed away and I never wanted this job. When I became a grown up after marrying and since I had refused my grandfather's work, I used to see two people chasing me and I would fall down and faint. I suffered for several years, my parents took me to a witchdoctor and they were told that I don't have any problem, the issue was because I refused my grandfather's work. I was treated and stopped falling down. I used to have a

severe form of epilepsy. I would faint in the morning at 8am until evening laying quiet down there, the only thing that was happening was my heartbeat. That's why you can see this biting in my lips. I was not born this way, and my hand gets broken whenever I go to the garden so that I can go back to my grandfather's work. I have not done this work out of my will. I was forced to do it.

I: According to you, someone is chosen to be a witch doctor?

R: Yes.

I: Are there any other causes for epilepsy apart from the one you have mentioned of a demon being in someone's shadow?

R: It can come through other ways, not necessarily that one.

I: Which other ways?

R: I may not understand much, but it can happen as though someone is mentally sick and has gone mad. One can overthink and issues happen until the person starts falling down or goes mad.

I: I would also want to know the type of epilepsy a person gets through madness, and the other one you had said you had refused your grandfather's work or through a demon in a shadow do they have different symptoms?

R: It's not easy to know the difference, it is just fainting.

I: How many people have you treated epilepsy and they got healed?

R: That epilepsy?

I: Yes.

R: Above ten.

I: Have you ever treated someone who never got healed from epilepsy?

R: Some defeat us in case they have gotten burned.

I: If they have gotten burned?

R: Yes.

I: How do you usually know that this person will be healed or not?

R: I check in the mirror, it either shows darkness or light. If I treat a person and he won't be healed I am usually aware. One might come to me seriously sick, probably he has been bewitched or it's normal sickness. I check and tell you I cannot treat and advise you to go to the hospital and get a blood test. It's not because you have been bewitched, it usually shows.

I: There are those that do not require a witchdoctor instead require one to be taken to hospital?

R: Yes.

I: There are those that don't need to be taken to hospital; they require witch doctor?

R: Yes.

I: Okay, I understand.

R: You don't know that?

I: No, I didn't know. That is why we called you. We don't know these things well.

R: All of them are not a must; they are seen by a witchdoctor.

I: When you see light it means someone will be healed?

R: Yes.

I: What about darkness?

R: It means the healing will not take place, but you cannot see.

I: I cannot see?

R: Yes, because you don't have the capability.

I: You are the only one who is able to see, if I look I will only see it as a mirror?

R: Yes.

I: You have said you have experience in treating epilepsy?

R: Yes.

I: How long have you treated epilepsy?

R: This year I have treated five and they were healed. It's God who heals when we treat.

I: Is it advisable for epileptic patients to go to hospital or to go to a witchdoctor?

R: They can go to the hospital or come to us. Some are too religious; they say this work is not good. Some, their parents take them to hospital and some are brought to us, you cannot force someone to come to you when they get sick, and besides they bring themselves you can't go for them.

I: In your opinion where should someone go to seek the service for epilepsy? Is it a hospital or witch doctor?

R: A person can go anywhere, in the hospital or to a witchdoctor.

I: If an epileptic patient comes and you have checked in the mirror and seen they will get healed, what will you use to treat that person?

R: So that I treat the person?

I: Yes.

R: I have the objects for work. I will tie them and tell the person to cross over and sit inside, I treat and I untie them to cross over in front and release the person to go, then I give the person medication.

I: What kind of medication will you give the person?

R: Herbs.

I: What kind of herbs are used to treat epilepsy?

R: Some of them I do not know their names in Swahili.

I: It's okay, tell me in your mother tongue. What are they called in Tharaka Nithi?

R: The herbs?

I: Yes.

R: There is one called *Mutongu, mukarakara, murawa, muvu* and *mukenia*.

I: You mix all of them?

R: Yes, I mix all.

I: How long will someone use the medication in order to be healed?

R: Once you are given the medication, I can give it for one week, morning and evening for a certain number of days.

I: Does one boil the herbs?

R: There are some for boiling and others are put in the porridge.

I: You had mentioned that there are certain objects the person will cross over and go backwards so that the person will be okay. What kind of objects are they?

R: Let's say for example, these are my objects of work, I put them in a certain way while you are in front of me, and you come on the other side, you cross over, you sit down and I administer the treatment then you leave using the front side. I do it the same way you have been bewitched and I give you medication you go and use and feel better and God helps you.

I: God has to help you to be healed?

R: Yes.

I: Is it possible for one to be treated and not get healed?

R: Yes, God is the one who knows a person's wellbeing. Even epileptic patients die and others get healed. God is the one who heals as we treat.

I: How is the demand for your services?

R: Over the weekend I can serve eight or three people. Currently things are tough, a person may want to see me and they don't have money. People know me, any work has its season, there are times the number is high and other times it's low.

I: Which season has high demand?

R: Everyone at the moment is complaining about money, I can get two, three or five.

I: Money is the challenge?

R: Yes, it's not that I am a bad person, when I treat them they go and bring someone else. They usually bring each other; I don't usually advertise my work.

I: You don't advertise your work out there?

R: No, I don't have any board advertising my work anywhere. My mode of advertisement is by word of mouth.

I: You have mentioned that at the moment people are not coming for the services due to lack of money?

R: Yes, they don't.

I: Don't worry we will get it. The kind of people you are serving do they usually get satisfied by your services?

R: Yes, they are usually very happy, they even go and bring their friends. When you get healed you must be happy.

I: They are satisfied?

R: Others bring me gifts.

I: You had mentioned that if you want to know someone has gotten healed there are signs you check in the mirror, when you see light you know this person will be healed, when the person does not get healed and dies, what happens to that person's spirit?

R: Probably the person's time usually has come to an end you cannot know beyond that.

I: Someone cannot know what will happen after the person dies?

R: You can't know, that is for God.

I: I don't know if my colleagues have anything. --

R: I might treat you at my office, you fail to get healed, you complain and I tell you to come back. We check again and see perhaps the problem is coming from the rural home. We will go to the rural home and uproot the thing that is causing a network for the person not to get healed. We treat the rest of the family so that all of them can be okay.

I: It's possible for someone to be epileptic because other members of the family have a problem?

R: Yes.

I: How will you know which family members have a problem?

R: We usually get the name in the mirror.

I: Okay. My colleagues, do you have any questions?

I2: Probably I may ask, you had mentioned the objects that you use together with the herbs, probably you can explain to us the objects that you put for someone to skip forward and backwards?

R: I have two types of thread, I tie one as I am facing you and another one as I show you my back. There is one called *ithitu*, in Tharaka we call it *ngozi*. There is *ngozi* for female and male groups, I will unbewitch you using one for male and for female. I make you sit there, when I put them you skip the same way you skipped the time you became sick. I treat and you skip forward, I give you medication, clean you and get healed.

I2: Those are epileptic patients?

R: Even epilepsy we treat that way, even other illnesses.

I2: All illnesses you use the same objects?

R: Yes.

I2: You said the demand is low because of lack of finances?

R: Yes.

I2: How much do you charge your clients because you have said the demand is low?

R: I usually ask for Ksh 2700 and 1500. It depends with the type of illness.

I2: How much do you charge an epileptic patient?

R: Ksh 7777 because the work involved is heavy.

I2: Ksh 7777?

R: Yes. You will come to me for the period I have given you until I ensure you are healed.

I2: The epileptic patient you still give the same herbs you mentioned, the ones for boiling and using in porridge?

R: Yes, others for sprinkling before one goes to bed so that if there are evil spirits they can go away.

I2: That is for an epileptic patient?

R: Yes, we treat that way and they get healed.

I2: What about those other patients?

R: We use the same method because the mirror usually shows how I will treat someone, I use the mirror, the one from my grandfather.

I2: The mirror is the one grandfather left for you?

R: Yes.

I3: You mentioned you see eight patients in a week or a day?

R: Yesterday I got two.

I3: In a day or week how many epileptic patients do you get?

R: That one takes a while, it is not easier to get an epileptic patient one can stay even for six months.

I3: Do people appreciate your services?

R: Yes, they appreciate.

I3: How do you know they appreciate those services?

R: For example, if you are the one with the problem or your child had an eye problem, they were bright in class and now they are number last, you bring the child, I usually ask for the child to come with a pen and a book. I treat the child and they get healed, you will be satisfied, if you see someone else with the problem you will send that person to come to me.

I3: You get to know the demand when the person brings another client?

R: Yes, they usually give me a call and ask if I am within. I am operating in both Nairobi and rural home. They can give me a call if I am at rural home and they come there, and if I am in Nairobi they come.

I3: Is there anything you do to an epileptic person when he or she dies?

R: When the person dies?

I3: Yes. Is there anything you do to that person? What happens to the person's spirit?

R: When the person dies there is nothing that we do.

I3: What happens to his spirit?

R: That one I cannot know in detail. The good or bad thing is I usually use the mirror. It's the mirror that shows me how I will treat a person without it I cannot work.

I3: That is the most important object in your work?

R: Yes. It shows me just the way you see on the television, you cannot see anything at all.

I: I can see we have come to an end. Is there anything you would like to add?

R: Which one?

I: Anything in your mind that you didn't get an opportunity to say?

R: I don't have much although according to the way I work for people, we can give a woman (*inaudible speech*), we treat a barren woman, sometimes mad people, even some are brought from Health Facility N and are brought to me and they get healed. I treat many illnesses and God heals. I can see you are discussing epilepsy.

I cannot be able to tell the causes, but because I had that problem, I used to see two old people chasing me, an old man and woman. When I see them and I get shocked I would fall down and my parents would assist me. The moment I see them again that's when I would regain my consciousness. Any other type of epilepsy I cannot explain the causes because you can be in a market like Muthurwa or Gikomba you see someone falling down and the person was not sick. When such people are brought, I assist them.

I: Before you were taken to a witchdoctor so that your parents could find out the problem was that you had refused your grandfather's work had they taken you anywhere else or in the hospital?

R: Yes, they took me to the hospital and they didn't get any help. I had been to many places for several years.

I2: At the hospital is it where they discovered that you were epileptic?

R: They went to a place called *kirurwa* in Tharaka, they were told "this child has no problem, his problem is that he was given work by his grandfather and refused". They were told the secret and what to do for the problem to be over. The problem came to an end and I began work.

I2: In the hospital they didn't get any help?

R: None, as I was getting blood tests there was no problem. Epilepsy is mostly brought by certain issues.

I2: The one you are saying from grandfather or which issue?

R: It is not a must for it to be the one from grandfather. Epilepsy we view it to be demonic, if one can get it as Malaria I cannot know. The way you have this knowledge, what do specialists say causes epilepsy?

I: You are the specialists we are listening to.

R: My opinion I usually view it as one has been bewitched or one is having too many thoughts.

I: We are grateful for your opinions. Thank you so much.

[End of audio]

