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Pen Avenue Malawi

A tap into the current conscience of Malawian writing

Quiet Revolutions

[January 17, 2017](#)

By *Angasamale Maliro*

Malice forms quietly.

A thief will die tonight in Chinyonga. His name is Chitsanzo Mbale but that is not important. It is also not important that he was the first of seven children or that his mother died when he was fourteen years old or that since filling her grave himself, he had not been in the same room with all of his brothers and sisters present; that he was lucky if he saw even half of them at the same time.

His children will quickly forget him. The youngest will know his face from the only dozen photographs on earth that captured his image. She will think he looked mean. By the time *she* is fourteen, the thought of him will conjure nothing but a dull longing which never lingers. Her name is also Chitsanzo but that too is not important.

You'll see.

~

Daya loved a cigarette. Loved the way the first drag burned her throat and how every proceeding one felt like silk in comparison. The way it felt, at times, she could feel the fatigue of her lungs and then, at others, only the pleasant sensation of the smoke filling the hollowness of her insides.

She sat there, alone, at the edge of a worn veranda made of cement, staring at the unkempt lawn of her hostel, hoping the bloody cigarette would kill her.

Internally seething, she huffed puffs of blue-grey smoke as she pictured her roommate underneath a man twice her age, probably thinking, “He’d better be quick” or “God, he’s so fat and sweaty” or “Does he have a wife?”

But she knew Hendrina would be thinking none of those things. She would be thinking, instead, about a new shade of lipstick she’d lingered on the last time she’d been at the mall. Or when she could next smoke some *chamba* that the guard who fancied her would keep for her. Or how it was almost the end of October and the landlord would soon be on her neck, as he always was when she hadn’t paid her rent.

Hendrina and her endless supply of inappropriate men. It wasn’t always easy to tell who was taking advantage of whom.

Frankly speaking, it was usually Hendrina. But the one she was with now was different. When Hendrina is with her men, one can practically see the strings being pulled. Not with this one. She has to work with him, which is both amusing and sad to watch. Her usual nonchalance had been replaced with a desperate fawning. Disgraceful.

It’s because he didn’t have a wife. The ones who did were always so eager to enchant her; so pathetically ready to do her bidding, absolutely gutted if they could not. Daya was accustomed to that. She’d never seen Hendrina let a man do anything. Until now.

Daya wanted to hate Hendrina. Hate her stupid tacky weave or the way her eyes lit up at fake jewellery or her unsettling, pathological sincerity. She wanted to hate her for her older men – men who’d eventually ruin her. But she couldn’t.

She loved her.

~

Over a year back in her homeland, Daya was yet to master the delicate art of a charcoal burner. The heavy reliance on a mbaula made Daya’s mouth bitter with anger.

“I miss Canada,” she huffed to herself before digging her knees into the soil and bracing to blow.

In and out she huffed, until her weak lungs were so exhausted they begged her brain to stop.

Daya slumped over, smacking her head on the ground. She’d have a small headache when she woke up but for now her dead nana was telling her something:

“My child, wake up and be strong.”

~

Hendrina called her men Merchants.

The one who had come today worked at a bank, drove a Mercedes Benz and carried too much money around with him. As if he thought the stacks would rot in a bank vault. Ironic.

Single and rich. Too good to be true. So of course he was ugly. Short, dark and the sort of hideous that would have displeased even the truest lover of babies. No, this man had never been something to behold.

He was the sort of person who lived his life like he was making up for a needy childhood.

When he took Hendrina out to eat, he would order Nsima with fish because he grew up in Salima, right next to the lake, and the meal reminded him of his sister, now long dead, who had raised him. Or he would order Nsima with chicken because he had grown up so poor that he would spend the entirety of his life believing chicken was very special.

He was an asshole, as far as Daya could tell. He had meanness in him. Always making crude, sexual jokes that left a sour taste. And when Hendrina came back to the room

one morning, crying and telling her he had raped her, Daya had only wondered why it had taken so long.

As Daya took the last puff of that cigarette, she decided that she was going to kill him.

~

Now Daya could feel that tingle that marijuana gives you as you smoke it; when you can feel your mind starting to slip as everything becomes, at once, heavier and lighter.

She felt giddy. She was going to kill a man.

When the *chamba* was done, Hendrina crawled into Daya's bed and wrapped herself lazily around her friend.

"Can I borrow a grand?"

Daya resisted the urge to stroke her roommate's slender arm and breathed.

"Didn't he give you anything?"

"He says next week," Hendrina said, stiffening slightly with shame. Daya noticed. "He wanted it plain. I can't get pregnant again. The beauty pageant is only a month away. Please Mami?"

Sometimes Daya wondered if Hendrina knew she was in love with her. She hated lesbians. Her reasons for hating them were as idiotic as they come and all wrapped up in her lapsed Catholicism. But then she made a habit of crawling into Daya's bed at night or asking for things in that stupid sweet voice she used on her Merchants.

"Of course," Daya said so Hendrina would hold her tighter.

When Hendrina fell asleep, Daya smoothed the tacky weave away from her friend's face and kissed her forehead, and desperately wished she could save her.

~

Peno stared at Daya with the curiosity of a child. She fascinated him so profoundly that he had a hard time thinking of the moments spent with her as anything other than a spiritual experience.

The last time she had come to his hostel, he had been consumed by regret. As she left his room, he had wanted to say, “My favourite thing is time spent with you”, but he had paused too long and the moment had passed and so, he could only smile as he watched her walk away.

And now here she was again, a storm of anger and beauty. Her bewildering mishmash brogue got thicker when she was furious at something. Today she was cursing men and “their stupid penises”.

She said, “God, they all think they can walk around and do whatever they bloody want, don’t they? Stupid twits. Oh, look at me, I have a dick so I’m just going to ruin your life because I decided.”

Peno thought Daya was sexy when she was angry and so he liked provoking her.

“But Dee, I’m a man too.”

Daya turned to him and stared, her expression relaying nothing but venom.

“Well, fuck you too then!” she yelled and stormed out.

He followed, watching her bum as she blazed down the hall. He wanted to sleep with her very much but knew she’d never accept. His next thought was monumentally stupid.

“Maybe if I get her drunk,” he mused but then cast it away because he was a good man. And Daya said he was her favourite person because she knew he was a good man.

So he followed her all the way to her hostel so that when she calmed down, they could smoke marijuana together and she would let him hold her when the *chamba* made her sleep.

~

Daya told Peno once that she liked women but he had thought it was a joke because lesbians were not real. It was all just lonely virgin girls at boarding schools. No such thing in real life except for white people and everyone knew white people weren't all there in the head.

She'd laughed it off after, wanting to erase her spoken error and even thanked her God, in private, when he'd believed her words had been in jest.

~

Chinyonga at night – always a beauty!

In Canada, she loved to take long evening strolls even after the novelty wore off. She thought it romantic and secretly enjoyed being sentimental.

Now, evening strolls made her feel African and sometimes that was charming and sometimes it was frightening.

Her aunt, who her parents had dumped her onto, had chosen a hostel in Chinyonga because she found comfort in affluence and nothing too bad could happen if you were surrounded by opulent houses.

Yes, her aunt took comfort in opulent neighbourhoods where all the kids grew up soft. Because when she'd been coming up, to be in a place like that, locked up with other girls, you had to know how to fight and her Daya couldn't fight for shit.

Daya only liked to walk around when the sun was set if she was with Peno because

she felt safe with him.

~

In three years, when Daya's father dies, she will feel a pang of regret at not having properly known him. She will be inconsolable for precisely thirty-five hours and eleven minutes, and then ponder on his relentless narcissism.

She will remember herself at eight years old, watching her father slap her mother who reacted by falling on her knees and begging forgiveness. She'll remember the sobbing and cowering; the image so violent and ghastly. And she will remember the kick – the awful kick – that fractured two of her mother's ribs and bruised the rest, and then she will run her fingers along her side and shiver.

She will remember when he had caught her with Haley – a pale beauty with flaxen hair; her first love. She'll remember how he'd pulled her hair so tight and how she'd struggled so hard, he yanked a bit of her scalp.

How he had towered over her and raised his fist and only lowered it when Haley, who had been screaming, suddenly stopped and with rage in her voice threatened to call the police who were *mzungu* police and not like the police back home who would have let him be because he was a *bwana*.

She would remember all that and never, not once in her remaining forty-eight years, mourn him again.

~

They nicknamed him The Teller. Daya didn't actually know what he did at the bank. Hendrina was not good with details so every time Daya pressed with questions, Hendrina would sigh and turn the conversation to her interests: herself, her debts or her vices.

~

The Teller was a shameless man.

While Hendrina danced, he edged closer to Daya on the couch and began stroking her bare leg and the girl shivered with disgust.

What irked more? The casual way in which he thought he could have her? The unbelievable fact that he was doing this to Hendrina's best friend? Or that she couldn't remember if this was the seventh or eighth time he had done this to her?

She'd given an indignant rant the first time he sullied her skin with his touch and it had amused him. The second time, she scowled and told him she wished he were dead. The fifth time, she slapped him and was satisfied to see anger in his eyes.

This time, she screamed at him!

Most of her shriek was drowned out by the house music but The Teller was startled and looked at her pleadingly, wishing she would stop making a spectacle of him. As if he had not already done so on his own when he had waltzed into that nightclub with a girl half his age dangling on his arm. Men are so perplexing.

Daya liked to cause a scene. Of course she did. She literally stood and bellowed at the older man and the delicious thrill of defiance coursed through her being, until she could feel the excitement in her knees.

It felt good to make this man feel small.

Then Peno came along. He gave Daya a look and a cackle and pulled her outside.

"Dee, you're crazy," he laughed as he quickly fashioned a joint to calm her down.

"I'm not crazy," she said, smiling. "I just enjoy retribution."

Chitsanzo's time has come.

The poor man does at least have a sense of his impending doom but people are full of folly, and so the unimportant Chitsanzo is hanging onto hope as he races down the hill.

He has a lead on the men chasing him. They're shouting, "*Okuba! Okuba!*", and he knows that if they catch him, he will die a thief.

Chitsanzo had hoped for certain things in his life – ascension, legacy...perhaps, even redemption. They're slipping away now as his legs burn, as they try to save him one last time. It should be his eyes trying to save him.

Let's not dwell on it, because in these last moments, this unimportant man isn't dwelling on it either.

The Benz comes out of nowhere and knocks the wind right out of him. It doesn't kill him though. Would be better if it had. But Chitsanzo's death order has an asterisk: comeuppance.

~

Peno was a good man.

So when The Teller hit a man with his car, his first instinct was to help.

His second instinct was far less honourable. He wondered if he was going to get in trouble.

Distraction took over as he decided if The Teller was solely responsible or if, he too, was to blame because he'd been distracting everyone with jokes at the older man's expense because it made the girls laugh and The Teller got sour very easily.

"Oh my God," Daya blurted next to him. She looked dazed and uncomfortable.

He stepped out of the car immediately. He was secretly smug that The Teller hadn't thought to yet. That he was already the hero of the story unfolding.

A light rush of night air caressed his skin and he breathed.

He jumped when The Teller's victim rose. His mouth gaped open as he watched the man limp away in terror.

Confusion mixed with his drunkenness but the mob quickly cured it. Peno's heart danced to the beat of "*Okuba! Okuba!*" And he did not think twice about dissolving into the sea of violent anger.

~

Good men should be righteous.

The scene awakened something angry and powerful inside of Peno. It felt good to watch this man – this nothing man, this deviant – crumble at the will of a collective fury.

It felt right. That's why he liked it. That's why it felt like glory.

It was some time before he thought of Daya again.

~

The only thing that exists now is pain.

"So this is how I die," thinks Chitsanzo, with his body trampled into the ground, his soul defeated and his entire being yearning for a release.

And this is his mind's eye as his body is imprisoned by a tire and set aflame: God.

Pain. God and Pain. Pain. So much goddamn pain.

That is his end.

~

There were two circles and a dot.

Daya's head reeled with heaviness. Why was Hendrina getting out of the car? Where was The Teller?

She stumbled out of the Mercedes and landed with her knees on the tarmac. Heart pounding, she stood to a wobble and took in the ghastly scene.

From where she stood on the hill, she could see it all: two circles and a dot.

The first circle - the inflictors. The ones who beat and burned the thief.

This was the first and last time the sight of Peno would take her breath away.

The second circle - the revellers. The ones who watched.

The crowd that gathered around the screeching, burning man was alive with gleeful satisfaction. Its spirit was appalled but delighted because it was bad to kill but there is no more savage a satisfaction than watching a man meet his comeuppance.

The dot – Daya Moses.

She didn't even notice that she was wheezing but she did notice them together - Hendrina and her merchant.

Her body wanted to surrender.

She puked.

Daya would never forget the smell of burning flesh. It would stick to her being for the rest of her life. Her mind's eye would cling to it until the moment of her own expiration.

She slowly backed away as nausea made her body tremble. She blinked back tears and tried to shut away the world.

"Fuck," she thought.

She couldn't do it, could she? She couldn't kill The Teller.

Here she was, merely *adjacent* from the horror of death and she was crumbling. How was she going to take a life when she was so weak?

~

Daya couldn't bear to suffer through The Teller's presence. Or Hendrina's. So she escaped to be with Peno.

On the third day of her hiding away in his bedroom, Daya woke up from a pleasant dream. In it, she was with Haley who had sung to her and fucked her and told her she was everything.

She let not her mind wonder about her lost love. She launched out of Peno's bed wearing a pair of his shorts. Lighter and cigarettes in hand, she waddled quickly across the hall.

When she reached the veranda, she sat wide-legged and let the first puff of smoke fill her tired lungs.

The night of mob justice had unravelled her, somewhat.

Witnessing death – murder, really – had conjured sensations of fear and dysfunction.

Watching that man die had filled her being with disgust.

The savagery of death was so gross and terrifying. And Daya had wanted no part of it.

But that morning, strength was a decision.

The Haley dream had reminded her of the extent of men's cruelty. She thought of the thief; if it was good that he'd been slain. It was, wasn't it? Awful men are deserving of punishment. And The Teller was so awful.

And just like that, she could bear her fear and disgust like she bore all her base tendencies – with malice.

Goddammit, she could kill a man!

~

The night Daya asked Peno to help her commit murder was the first he fell asleep feeling anything but affectionate towards her.

He was so angry with her. Hadn't she said he was a good man? Had those words meant anything to her?

She'd asked him two nights after the mob justice.

For three nights she had been sleeping at his hostel, on his bed, nestled in his arms when slumber took her.

She didn't go to her classes or text her friends. Not even Hendrina. She read books and solved puzzles and cradled against him when the sun went down.

But on the third night, her bravado returned. She started talking *at* him again, demanding full attention in that way she did; as though she knew very well what a magnificent creature she was.

And when she asked, she did not wait for him to answer before tucking herself cosily under his sheets and falling asleep.

~

The Teller enjoyed being treated like one of them. Like one of the kids. It was mortifying and embarrassing.

He liked it when Hendrina treated him like her boyfriend. And her hostel was the only place that she could come close to treating him like she could actually love him.

It was good that he had taken her out that night, even if he had the burden of enduring those ticks she called her friends.

As they walked into the hostel, she leaned severely against him, her body heavy with drunkenness. He let her weight settle against him, cradling her carefully; completely oblivious, or rather uncaring, as to how it looked to everyone watching.

Like a man taking care of his daughter...or a bastard taking advantage.

The guard tutted.

Daya seethed.

~

Daya was not an expert in murder. She googled how to do it and Google told her to poison him.

She would sprinkle the poison on all of their food. She hadn't told Peno about that part. That they would all have to suffer.

Peno and Daya will be sick for three days. Daya will be admitted into hospital for dehydration and Peno will be reluctant to visit her because now that he knew she was dangerous, he was paranoid.

But he will go.

He loves her, after all.

~

Since there was three times as much poison in his food, The Teller suffered the most.

He died so suddenly and violently. Worst of all? He died completely alone – terrified and wishing he'd had a better end.

Daya remembered how she had wished once that The Teller would die choking on his own blood. In the morning, she smiled as she watched his corpse. Vomit wasn't so bad a substitute.

~

Peno would never forget Hendrina's scream. The shriek would never leave his mind's eye. It would never stop making his blood run cold.

He pretended the worst part was getting away with it. For years, he would have a chip on his shoulder about being a murderer. A wife and two daughters would cure his guilt. But in the stretch of time until that happened, Peno was Cain of Eden.

The actual worst part was losing Daya, whose act of quiet violence had changed her irrevocably. She carried the satisfaction of their kill like a cloak of armour, revelling in its macabre and justice.

But fucking hell, did he still really love her!

~

A man died right beside her. That didn't put Hendrina off merchants so Daya knew nothing ever would.

What was it all for?

Pondering the question, Daya laughed.

“It was for me,” she said to herself, and that was true, but it didn't even matter. It mattered only that she was not weak.

She lit herself a cigarette. Every puff these days felt like a celebration.

And she liked the burn.

Comments

1.

[*Vesh F. Baby*17 January 2017 at 22:31](#)

Gave me chills. She's completely unremorseful. Wow!

[Reply](#)

2.

[JOHN KACHERE17 January 2017 at 22:35](#)

I love the story. The grammar is impeccable and I must confess that I felt like I was reading some Acheberian literature. It is the best short story I have ever read in the last one year. Oh wait, perhaps my life.

[Reply](#)

3.

[Vin Chafulumira17 January 2017 at 23:19](#)

Wow!so much creativity in the story.Thumbs up!

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4.

[Dorothy Mbale18 January 2017 at 00:07](#)

Very exciting!
Daya and is a wild woman
Great writing.

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5.

[Benson Saka18 January 2017 at 01:39](#)

Hendrina surely is daft man. The Teller's demise should have been enough reason to call it quits on the merchants.

crazy piece i love it... keep it up Angasa

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6.

[Wishes Banda18 January 2017 at 01:55](#)

It's an epic story Mista. I like how it is a story for a competition about someone writing a story for a competition. I hope u win.

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7.

[noria unyolo18 January 2017 at 02:56](#)

WOW Quiet Revolutions really ...the techniques you have for getting ideas and thoughts out and down into writing are just brilliant.
Malawi's got Talent... you are a talented writer Angasa

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8.

[Paul Laurelmwale18 January 2017 at 03:41](#)

Wow! Angasa this is breathtaking. Worth a million reads. Over and over again

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9.

[elijah flowz18 January 2017 at 08:33](#)

Wow this is great writing. Loving this

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10.

[Unknown18 January 2017 at 08:49](#)

Great piece! Impressive

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11.

[Prisca Chakholoma18 January 2017 at 09:08](#)

This is impressive, keep up

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12.

[Lorraine Lusinje18 January 2017 at 09:15](#)

This piece of work is simply surreal.

□

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1.

[Magret Nyaika18 January 2017 at 10:15](#)

Wow I love the story.... Keep it up

13.

[Nyapha Kati18 January 2017 at 10:08](#)

It is amazing how your story unfolds. Its well written that you dont get to guess whats coming next. Surely u have talent Anga-untapped talent. Well done and keep it up.

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14.

[Yasinta Nyaika18 January 2017 at 10:16](#)

What a great pieace!Feels like so real characters. They do exist.

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15.

[Henry Kankwamba18 January 2017 at 10:42](#)

Fantastic work of art.

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16.

[monica_namandwa18 January 2017 at 10:45](#)

Very captivating story that is. Wow!, great writing techniques too, keep up the good work Angasa

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17.

[audria ndacheredwa18 January 2017 at 10:47](#)

Wow! I love this. Keep it up

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18.

[Catherine Chisuse18 January 2017 at 10:58](#)

Wow! What a talent! Keep it up and may God be with you.

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19.

[Wezi Mkwaila18 January 2017 at 11:22](#)

Keep it up

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20.

[Chikumbutso Bakuwa18 January 2017 at 11:27](#)

This is stunning Angasa. Daya is reprehensible and captivating. Loved reading this. Hope you win!

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21.

[Daniel Manduwa18 January 2017 at 11:44](#)

A pen with brains. Art articulated. Amazing

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22.

[asasira gilbert18 January 2017 at 11:46](#)

Well done, beautiful read

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23.

[asasira gilbert18 January 2017 at 11:47](#)

Well done, beautiful read

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24.

[Rabecca Kamphani18 January 2017 at 12:38](#)

what an amazing short story, worth reading. Well done, keep it up

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25.

[Rowland Kamanga18 January 2017 at 20:23](#)

Wow, the story is wonderful and the wording is great. This is simply a best piece, thumbs up!

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26.

[prisca banda mbale18 January 2017 at 23:06](#)

Great writing skills Ngasa, you are blessed

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27.

[Unknown18 January 2017 at 23:28](#)

Great story, absolutely worth reading.

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28.

[Vitta Chirwa19 January 2017 at 02:04](#)

impressive writing skills.

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29.

[Khwima Mwasinga19 January 2017 at 02:57](#)

Captivating and eloquent, I'm amazed Angasa. Pure talent

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30.

[Christina19 January 2017 at 03:11](#)

Ngasa you got talent, thumbs up.

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31.

[Sali19 January 2017 at 03:57](#)

I love how this shows the toxic nature of romanticising people. Awesome story!

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32.

[Prisca Mbale19 January 2017 at 06:07](#)

Wow! This is great Angasa, keep it up

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33.

[Prisca Mbale19 January 2017 at 06:08](#)

Wow! This is great Angasa, keep it up

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34.

[Magret Nyaika19 January 2017 at 06:55](#)

This comment has been removed by the author.

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35.

[Ruth Kunsida19 January 2017 at 10:42](#)

wow!!!!...l lyk the story tho.

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36.

[Jacque's Blogs19 January 2017 at 11:49](#)

Very interesting...i ♥

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37.

[*shirrah wonderful kagwam'minga*19 January 2017 at 12:13](#)

Great work, very creative

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38.

[*steven kondowe*19 January 2017 at 13:25](#)

This is really amazing.

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39.

[*yamikani magombo*19 January 2017 at 17:30](#)

Wow, Bravo anga, nyc story keep it up

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40.

[*Sindimadziwa*20 January 2017 at 02:30](#)

breathtaking

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41.

[*Sibongile Zimba*20 January 2017 at 09:28](#)

Great piece worthy reading. Thumbs up!!!

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42.

[Sibongile Zimba20 January 2017 at 09:28](#)

Great piece worthy reading. Thumbs up!!!

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43.

[Sibongile Zimba20 January 2017 at 09:28](#)

Great piece worthy reading. Thumbs up!!!

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44.

[Lumbani Jenda20 January 2017 at 10:39](#)

very impressive.....Love it!!!

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45.

[Unknown20 January 2017 at 11:10](#)

Interesting technique; your manipulation of time & perspective was very well done.
Thanks for posting & good luck!

IG @kaie.space_author

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46.

[Tetelite20 January 2017 at 22:21](#)

A good piece for upcoming writer

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47.

[Unknown21 January 2017 at 00:43](#)

WOW..Talk about creativity...good job ngasa

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48.

[Herbert Piriminta21 January 2017 at 06:18](#)

Good style of writing. I like the presentation style of the story.

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49.

[namalamba21 January 2017 at 20:33](#)

A lovely story and well written!

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50.

[Maurlin Madukani23 January 2017 at 08:47](#)

Been trying to figure out what to say your writing skills quiet unique.... one word for this story..... MAGNIFICO!!!!!! I LOVE IT

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51.

[Sahan Lungu23 January 2017 at 10:37](#)

Mmmmmmmmmmmhrrrrrr....scintillating stuff

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52.

[Nenge Mkochi26 January 2017 at 02:12](#)

You are word architect. I love your style. Your talent fused with your passion for writing makes the perfect recipe.

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53.

[crimzonblog9126 January 2017 at 05:59](#)

Of the 3 stories this is definitely the best. The language was impeccable. The subject matter was common but it had a twist. Well done

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54.

[Mary Simbeye9 March 2017 at 06:24](#)

Beautiful piece!

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