

Most of us have heard the saying, "there are no new ideas", and while one could apply it to several areas of life, it is most associated with storytelling. Perhaps this is because the famous words were uttered by Mark Twain, who despite being one of America's greatest writers was undoubtedly plagued by moments of doubt. However, like Twain, there are some writers who can take an old idea, then add a personal imprint so powerful that it seems new. Chris Elgood is one of those writers, and his novel, *He Only Died Twice*, is certainly one of those books.

What sets Elgood apart is his heroine, Nshila Maghrita Ileloka: a respectable and highly educated resident of the UK, a successful businesswoman, and hired assassin who uses a combination of the latest technology and ancient witchcraft from her remote village in Central Africa.

Add to that to a plot with more hairpin turns than an advanced slalom course and you've got a winner. *He Only Died Twice* is a continuation of Nshila's story, which began with Elgood's previous novel, *Accidental Assassin*. In the present case, however, Nshila is commissioned for her most dangerous job yet: the assassination of a member of Parliament. Despite the peril, Nshila accepts, especially since it does not violate her cardinal rule: only kill those who are both "despicable and otherwise untouchable". Her latest victim, with his penchant for violence, drug dealing and human trafficking, certainly fits that bill. Nshila has little doubt she will complete her mission. The question is, will she survive?

It is not too often that we see a self-realized female character in contemporary literature, and Nshila is one of the strongest I've read since Stieg Larsson's Lisbeth Salander. As I reluctantly turned to the last page, I was already craving more of her adventures. Luckily, I don't have to wait. Nshila returns in *The Eager Apprentice*, which is already available for purchase.