

I love to read and I love to discover new authors. Accidental Assassin was originally published in 2006 and then republished in 2011. What attracted me to this book was the unusual storyline, how could Chris Elgood possibly pull off a story chronicling how a young girl growing up in a remote part of Africa morphed into a much- in-demand assassin in the UK?

A cardinal rule in writing is to select subjects that you have some knowledge about. Oh don't get me wrong, I am not saying that you have to be an assassin to write about the subject, rather that you need some experience with the places and their social makeup to create a convincing backdrop.

It transpires that Chris Elgood has the knowledge. I did a little online digging and found this snippet:

Conventional English middle-class. School. University. Stores supervisor in tribal area of the Lozi people (Barotseland) on the upper Zambesi. Schoolteacher (New Zealand). Civil Servant (Northern Rhodesia/Zambia). Industrial training executive (STC & GKN). Lecturer (Police Staff College).

So let's get back to Accidental Assassin. The main character is Nahila Marghrita Ileloka, who spends her early years growing up in a remote village in Central Africa. Victimised by her half-brothers, she finds an unlikely protector in the local Witchdoctor, Kwaname. She is indeed viewed as the sorcerers apprentice and so treated with deference. This view becomes even more evident with the demise of a cattle thief following a ritual.

But there is far more to her than witchcraft, she is a bright girl and completes what we in the US would call High School. Her grades are so high that she is offered a scholarship to the London School of Economics in the UK and goes on to obtain an MBA degree.

Even with a full scholarship there is little money for pleasures. Most students take part jobs as waiters or bartenders, but not Ileloka. She finds a more lucrative way of paying the bills.

To share more of the plot would spoil it for the reader, so instead I will offer some general observations. While *Accidental Assassin* is a work of pure fiction Chris Elgood hits on a number of very thought provoking concepts. Not least of which is the role that superstition, magic, or even religion plays in society. Is it real, or is it a state of mind?

He also poses the question, can an assassin be on the side of the angels? His heroine Nahila Marghrita Ileloka is after all a thief, a thief of life. Is this ever an acceptable solution? Some will argue no, and some will argue yes.

Accidental Assassin is a fascinating read, and the first in a trilogy. It is well constructed, the plot runs well, and the character development deserves praise. This is a book that has wide appeal. Rather than wallow in sex, bad language and gratuitous violence (as many authors love to do), Chris Elgood stays firmly with the story not the blood, gore and titillation. I salute him for doing that! It is a refreshing change.