



Humans: Volume 2: Mjomba and the Evil Ghost: The Untold Story of Adam and Eve and their Descendants

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Mjomba and the Evil Ghost is a discursive novel concerned with the heresy that it views as inherent in scholarship; it works to justify the dogma of the Catholic Church.

Joseph Luguya's book *Mjomba and the Evil Ghost* involves a sprawling discourse with Satan concerning the tenets and values of Christianity.

Christian Mjomba is a Stanford-educated success story. The virtuous Tanzanian scholar is also an amateur theologian; in the book, he functions as a stand-in for Christian inquiry. Even his name is symbolic: "mjomba" means "fish" in Swahili. Through a twisting, dramatic series of debates and clashes with dark forces, he explores ideas about faith.

The opponent in Christian's debates is Satan, who is silver-tongued, slick, and convincing. Christian's arguments are human and sometimes clunky, so Satan often claims the upper hand. Referred to by many aliases and claiming to be "more catholic than the Catholics," Satan can debate any point. The two cover topics including the meaning of "victory of good over evil," the pre-lapsarian state of original virtue, murder, and the dangers of rationalization.

Both parties hold forth at length, with Satan picking holes in each of Christian's arguments with the expertise of a lawyer. Christian believes that each human is special and loved by the "Prime Mover," while Satan dismisses the claim, saying no human experiences are unique. The tone of their arguments is that of two dueling sermons, with both parties bent on explaining the minutiae of Catholic doctrine to each other. In some cases, semantics become the focus, and themes are lost; such scenes are pedantic. The book's solid pages of dialogue overwhelm its characters, landscape, blocking, and tone. Although each debate has a satisfying conclusion, the book as a whole is without an emotional trajectory. Satan is not vanquished; doubt persists.

The book's premise—a confrontation between a naïve believer and an evil corruptor—is a metaphor for the Christian experience on Earth, but spiritual arguments swamp the story. The text comes to function as a spiritual screed within a fictional scaffolding—a parable about questioning and the vulnerability of faith. Further, the stakes of the conflict are unclear: Christian does not seem to be fighting for his soul, but is defending the honor of his spiritual path. More than once, he plays into Satan's verbal gambits, emerging each time with his faith unshaken. The book's extensive, in-depth scholarship is excellent, educational, and exhaustive, but as a morality play, the book is too dense to be entertaining.

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