



Chanda's Secrets

By Allan Stratton

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Chanda's mother is not herself, her younger sister is acting out, and her best friend needs help. A powerful story set amid the African HIV/AIDS pandemic. In this sensitive, swiftly paced story, readers will find echoes of *To Kill a Mockingbird* as Chanda, a 16-year-old, astonishingly perceptive girl living in the small city of Bonang in Africa, must confront the undercurrents of shame and stigma associated with HIV/AIDS. Through his artful style and dramatic storytelling, Allan Stratton captures the enduring strength of loyalty, the profound impact of loss, and a fearlessness that is powered by the heart. Above all, it is a story about living with truth. Proceeds from the sale of this book will be used to support organizations working to better the lives of Africans living with HIV/AIDS.

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Chanda's Secrets By Allan Stratton Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 8 Up—Chanda, 16, remembers the good times, when she lived with both parents on a cattle post in sub-Saharan Africa and even later on when her family moved to Bonang. Her family's troubles began after her father was killed in the diamond mines. Her first stepfather abused her; the second died of a stroke; the third is a drunken philanderer. Although Chanda lives in a world in which illness and death have become commonplace, it is not one in which AIDS can be mentioned. The horror and desperation of families facing this disease is brought home when her latest stepfather's sister dumps the dying man in front of their shantytown house. Before Chanda can get help from the hospital caseworker, he disappears and the wagon that brought him is burned. Her mother leaves to visit her family on the cattle post and Chanda is forced to give up her dream of further education to care for her younger sister and brother. Slowly she comes to realize that her mother has AIDS, and that she might be infected herself. But Chanda's education serves her well as she faces the disease head-on. In a sad but satisfying ending, she rescues her mother so that she can die at home and she and her siblings get themselves tested. Smart and determined, Chanda is a character whom readers come to care for and believe in, in spite of her almost impossible situation. The details of sub-Saharan African life are convincing and smoothly woven into this moving story of poverty and courage, but the real insight for readers will be the appalling treatment of the AIDS victims. Strong language and frank description are appropriate to the subject matter.—*Kathleen Isaacs, Edmund Burke School, Washington, DC*
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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review Gr. 9-12. The statistics of the millions infected with HIV/AIDS in southern Africa find a human face in this gripping story of one teenager, Chanda Kabele, who sees the disease threaten her family and community. Far from case history, Chanda's immediate, first-person, present-tense narrative is neither sentimental nor graphic as it brings close the personal struggle with all its pain and loss, shame and guilt. Chanda's stepfather and baby stepbrother died of the disease. Now Mama may have it. No one will talk about the cause. Is Chandra infected? Her best friend, driven to prostitution, does get AIDS, which is dormant. Should Chanda take her in? Stratton, who has lived and worked in southern Africa, creates an authentic sense of the community in town and in the bush, including the poverty, overburdened hospitals, struggling schools, and packed cemeteries. The message about overcoming ignorance and shame and confronting the facts is ever present, but the tense story and the realistic characters--caring, mean, funny, angry, kind, and cruel--will keep kids reading and break the silence about the tragedy. Proceeds from sales go to fighting AIDS. *Hazel Rochman*
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Review

Chanda is a likeable and well-written character... A great choice for learning about other cultures and about the AIDS crisis. (Rebecca Vnuk VOYA)

Film adaptation, winner of the Prix François Chalais (2010 Cannes International Film Festival 2010-05-01)

Stratton brings the despair, overwhelming poverty and the impact of AIDS/HIV to life while at the same time depicting the strength of human character when faced with adversity. (Anne Hatcher *Resource Links*)

It brings to life Africa's problem with AIDS and poverty -- a story the world needs to know. (Barbara Jo McKee *Library Media Connection* 2004-11-15)

A searing book on an important subject... there is not a maudlin moment in the novel, just genuine grief and understanding as the epidemic assumes some of its many human faces. (*Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*)

The strong, respectful writing makes this crucial and broadly relevant story unfailingly human. (*Kirkus Reviews* 2004-05-15)

[Starred Review:] Smart and determined, Chanda is a character whom readers come to care for and believe in, in spite of her almost impossible situation. The details of sub-Saharan African life are convincing and smoothly woven into this moving story of poverty and courage, but the real insight for readers will be the appalling treatment of the AIDS victims. Strong language and frank description are appropriate to the subject matter. (Kathleen Isaacs *School Library Journal*)

By focusing on Chanda's personal struggle with what Stephen Lewis, UN special envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, calls a "sinister, invisible poison," the novel demonstrates that love, loyalty, family, and friendship can flourish in an open and truthful atmosphere once the destructive influence of secrecy has been conquered. With well-paced, robust prose and well-cadenced dialogue, the novel provides valuable insights into the role religion, superstition, culture and customs play in the daily lives of Bonangians. Chanda's struggles put a face to the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS and provide a gripping and heart-wrenching reading experience designed for mature readers. Younger readers may need some preparation to deal with the sensitive and complex topics the novel addresses. Rape, prostitution, adultery, sexual abuse, HIV/AIDS and other difficult subjects are presented in a matter-of-fact fashion and lend credibility and honesty to this discussion of a modern epidemic. (*CM Magazine*)

It is about death and dying and survivors -- those who are left to cope with the vast loss of losing loved ones... Through all the adversity, Chanda never lacks hope, and she never stops dreaming. (KaaVonnia Hinton *KLIATT* 2004-07-15)

[Starred review:] neither sentimental nor graphics close the personal struggle... The message about overcoming ignorance and shame and confronting the facts is ever-present, but the tense story and the realistic characters -- caring, mean, funny, angry, kind and cruel -- will keep kids reading and break the silence about the tragedy. (Hazel Rochman *Booklist* 2004-07-01)

American Library Association Book Pick for 2005: selected as one of the Best Books for Young Adults. (*School Library Journal*)

Starred Selection 2009 (*Canadian Children's Book Centre*)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jorge Wilson:

Book is usually written, printed, or highlighted for everything. You can realize everything you want by a guide. Book has a different type. To be sure that book is important factor to bring us around the world. Alongside that you can your reading ability was fluently. A e-book Chanda's Secrets will make you to possibly be smarter. You can feel considerably more confidence if you can know about every little thing. But some of you think in which open or reading some sort of book make you bored. It isn't make you fun. Why they might be thought like that? Have you looking for best book or suited book with you?

Dustin Broach:

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Donald Scott:

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Connie Hockaday:

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