

# Revolting's Revolt

In the city of Cape Town stands towering skyscrapers gleaming with prosperity in innovation and promise. The streets would bustle with an upbeat urban life where the confines of tradition had faded and the new age of modernism began to rise. Amongst the fast-developing metropolis emerged a higher society, the privileged elite who knew no bounds to extravagance and indulged in the rich delicacies of the city. They had set an overwhelming caliber for the people of Cape Town and became the signifier of true success. They had established a division, a locked door perhaps, between the utopia of luxury and comfort and the bleak reality of the world. Just beyond this zestful hustle culture, hiding between tight, dark alley ways of the city, lived society's forgotten mass. With their hopes and dreams unreached and stories untold, the homeless struggled for survival. Knowing they will never be able to dream about achieving a tiny grain of success, they watched the people with an insatiable hunger stride across the city.

Within the forgotten corners of Long Street resided a homeless man. On the warmer days, he would lay within a makeshift abode made from various salvaged materials in an old, tattered blanket. On the cooler days, he rested within dustbin bags in large dumpsters in hopes that some sort of warmth would emit from it. His hair, like a tangled mop of brown and grey fell in disarray. An unkempt beard accompanied the deep wrinkles that etched a story of hardship and perseverance on his boney face. The homeless man had no name. in fact, he doesn't *remember* his name. In the 13 years he had been homeless, he had faced the relentless side of society in that every passerby would contort a face of disgust and hastily lower their gaze, mumbling demeaning remarks. In all the names he had been called, "Revolting" was one he particularly liked. Although hearing the remark felt like swallowing bitter poison, he began to resonate with the first part of the word. A 'revolt' was what he began to long for. He longed to fight for redemption, to feel importance and take responsibility for his life. It became his mission in life to piece together his shattered sense of identity to unravel his purpose, to find responsibility.

He would dwell the streets, observing the rich men who would exit the building of large corporations and how they would present themselves- Erect posture whilst striding in confidence with a warm grin or a particular sternness. This was his way of piecing together the remnants of his identity. He would pay close attention to every gesture and mannerism and meticulously mirror them. There was one man who Revolting took a particular liking to. At Revolting's first glance of Mr. Hugo, he was the human embodiment of privilege and abundance. On every day of the week, he wore tailored designer suits that flawlessly fitted his muscular build. There was an aura of importance that radiated from him. It was a cold day in winter when Mr. Hugo had met Revolting. He had dropped a R20 note into Revolting's hands when

their eyes locked momentarily. There was something in Mr. Hugo's eyes that reflected a glimmer of empathy that enveloped Revolting. It was an indescribable warmth. For the first time, he felt seen. He felt acknowledged. Overwhelmed by gratitude, Revolting was rendered speechless, unable to express how deeply moved he was by a simple interaction. As Mr. Hugo walked away, Revolting watched the gold watch glimmer on Mr. Hugo's wrist, hinting at his life of stature and success. However, behind those glimmers, Revolting realized the true measure of wealth- it lies not in material possessions but in the impact and responsibility one has, the legacy one chooses to leave behind. From that day onwards, Mr. Hugo became a sort of beacon of hope that Revolting was to seek after. No, an all-encompassing force that drove him. Every thought Revolting had had Mr. Hugo entwined within them and in this way, the boundaries between rationality and obsession blurred. Mr. Hugo ruled Revolting's mind.

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For about 2 years, every waking thought revolved around Mr. Hugo. Revolting yearned to indulge in Mr. Hugo's presence and interact with him again. In a relentless pursuit, Revolting began to follow his every move. He would wake up at exactly 6am to make it just in time to see Mr Hugo walk out of a café with a medium cup of coffee. Mr. Hugo would drive to his workplace whilst Revolting walked 2 blocks to sit outside the corporation entrance. At exactly 6:30pm, Mr. Hugo would leave the building to travel back home and Revolting would make his way back to his abode too. It became apparent to the other homeless folk that Revolting was bound by this strange infatuation as he would leave hastily at the same time every single day. They would deliberately avoid crossing paths with him. They would make an effort to heighten their whispers of concern for him but Revolting remained oblivious to the abnormality of his behavior. By carefully observing Mr. Hugo day by day, Revolting found deep comfort, familiarity and a sense of control as he followed this routine.

Just as he usually did, Revolting went on his day watching Mr. Hugo, except, for the first time, Mr. Hugo had deviated from his schedule. Instead of driving home, Mr. Hugo walked hand-in-hand with a tall and slender woman with bright red lips to the Col' Cacchios restaurant for dinner on lower Buitengracht Street. Inquisitively, Revolting followed them stealthily in dimly lit parts of the streets. Once Mr. Hugo and the red-lipped woman entered the restaurant, Revolting sat himself on the pavements and watched them through the big windows at the front. He wondered how he could've possibly missed out on such an important detail throughout his observations of Mr. Hugo. Revolting watched the 2 seated across from each other, sharing flirtatious glances at one another. They feasted on bread and sipped on wine. Revolting watched Mr. Hugo's spirit lift as the air filled with cheery giggles and the whispers of sweet

nothings from the red-lipped lady. Their eyes conveyed the unspoken language of love. Revolting couldn't remember the last time he had experienced the gentleness and solace of affection. He questioned when love will embrace his heart...if it were even possible for someone like him to love. He sat in awe watching them playfully hint at their love as they tenderly smiled at one another.

The bitterness of his yearning and the cold wind forced Revolting to head back home. Just before he headed to usual corner, he stopped at C.T Supermarket, one of the spaza shops on Long Street. With a heavy heart, Revolting counted every single cent he had to buy a loaf of bread. He remembered the R20 note that Mr. Hugo had given him when they had first met. He grabbed a 50ml bottle of methylated spirit and bought both items. Excited to feast on nourishment, he ran back to his spot and snuggled himself within 2 rubbish bags. Just before he could mix the denatured alcohol with the bread, a timid stray dog approached him, pleading for a morsel of the bread. With mournful eyes, it stood with a visible ribcage. Revolting couldn't help but share the bread.

"You must be starving."

The stray sat patiently to be fed by Revolting and held a distant gaze. Revolting held the stray close and stroked what was left of his fur.

"For once, it was comforting to have a companion by my side. Have you realized the profound anguish one feels when lonely? There is a sort of emptiness that haunts me. At every heartbeat, I feel aches that echo throughout me. To worsen it all, there is another weight...purposelessness. Like a cloak of darkness, it shrouds my eyes from the beauty of human experience. In desperation I plea. Whether, in this lifetime, it is worth it to attempt to discover my purpose. I don't feel anything, besides this bitter cold that wearies my soul."

As Revolting expressed his feelings and sipped on the methylated spirit, the stray began to gradually move away from him inch by inch. Whether it was because the bread had been poisoned or because of the melancholy and discomfort the stray felt listening to Revolting, the stray chose to leave him alone as tears began to well in Revolting's eyes. As he gulped the last sips, the sky began to spin in a whirlpool of blurriness. Nauseated, his face turned pale sweat rolled down his temples. The bitter taste and pungent smell of the alcohol tainted his senses. A weight began to pull from his chest where he drowned into a state on unconsciousness.

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“His eyes are opening! Can someone get a glass of water?”

Revolting groaned as his head throbbed. The room was a bright white with the sun shining through the windowpane that felt harsh against his eyes. There was a figure sitting beside him on the mattress. They had a delicate aroma of a powder sweetness. Revolting slowly attempted to sit himself upright before a wave of nausea washed over him. His throat was parched, dried with the bitterness of the methylated spirit. Revolting had a look of disbelief that he had survived as he began to regain consciousness again.

“Where am I? And who are you?”, asked Revolting as he refocused his eyes.

“I’m Volante, you’re at the Hope Exchange shelter, sir. We found you last night, by God’s grace.”

She warmly smiled and gave him a glass of water. Before Revolting could respond, he contemplated whether it was by God’s grace that he was saved. In fact, he felt as though he *hadn’t* been saved. In the depths of his despair, in his experience of living, he felt no means to live. Why would God want to save him? He wondered why the young woman spoke with a heart swelled with pride and where her resilient optimism originated.

“I need to leave.”

“Sir, we’re here to save you. You need to receive treatment. We’ve called a doctor to help you.”

Her adamance frustrated him. He took the last sips of water and shoved the glass into her hands.

“Don’t be a hero. There is no “saving” needed. There is no need to save someone like me. I’m fine on my own. I don’t want to be the main character to the pity party you’re hosting for me.”

“Everyone deserves to be saved. There is no need to be constantly stuck before the door. Let us help you. We will provide you with help to be self-sufficient and independent again. You’ll finally be able to truly experience life like the rest of us.”

“No. You don’t understand. There are some people who are bound to being stuck before the door. And in this lifetime, they will never be able to possess the key to the door because of the sizable weight of their background, poorness and state of mind. These do not allow them to enter the realm of this city’s utopia.

They will forever be locked from entering the door. So let me be and let me go.” Revolting looked away from the lady, feeling embarrassed and vulnerable that the topic of his health was on the table.

“I don’t see your point in sitting in melancholy. Its futile!”

“You could take me to therapy, sort out all my issues...but what if all you’re offering me are just psychological coping mechanisms? Like a coverup to who I truly am? I long for a true boulder to push. Something that’ll reveal me. I want to have the nobility of a true weight to bear. Keeping me here will only make me feel feebler and more futile.”

“I don’t understand.” said Volante as her brows furrowed in uncertainty.

“I don’t ever want you to understand the feeling. But if you truly care, let me go.”

Volante stood in bewilderment. The pleading in Revolting’s eyes coerced her to let him go and so he did. Revolting hastily gathered himself and left the room. On the clock, it read 6:25pm. His eyes darted around the foyer for the exit. He ran out the building. The evening wind rushed through his tattered hair as he propelled through the streets. Regardless of the ill state of his body, he ran with determination, with reason unbeknownst. People watched him in awe, feeling the urgency in chaos of his strides. Revolting’s eyes were fixated on the end of Long Street at the intersection. Just as he reached the intersection, he stepped into the middle of road. In a heart-stopping moment, the sound of screeching tires and a car horn echoed through the street. Revolting was launched into the air with his limbs stretched. In a panic frenzy, Mr. Hugo looked over the dashboard to find Revolting’s lifeless body laying across the road. He landed on the ground with hot blood starting to gush from his head, steaming on the cold tar. As Revolting’s legs twitched uncontrollably, for the last time, he opened his eyes for a moment only to be blinded by the bright headlights. The ringing in his ears was slowly consumed by an eerie silence. In attempt to escape the consequences of the accident, Mr. Hugo fleetingly speed off into the distance.

Revolting believed he martyred himself as a true symbol of the apathy of the world. Although in his unfortunate death with no one to celebrate the life he lived or serve gratitude for his act of sacrifice, it was his own sort of redemption. In all of Revolting’s life, he sought for importance and responsibility which he hadn’t achieved only until he decided the day he died. That for once, he had control over an

important decision. His death was not determined by life itself nor his circumstances but rather in his own choice to finally feel responsible for himself again.