



Deadly Harvest

By Michael Stanley
ISBN: 9780062221537

Introduction

Girls are disappearing in Botswana. The rumor is they're being harvested for muti, a witch doctor's potion traditionally derived from plants and animals and which, some believe, can be made more potent by adding human remains. Detective David "Kubu" Bengu joins the investigation with the police force's newest detective and only woman Samantha Khama, for whom the case is personal.

Soon one girl's father, convinced that his daughter's death is linked to the recent popularity of a political candidate, takes the law into his own hands. After the father flees, what Kubu and Samantha find in the politician's home confirms their worst fears: *muti* containing human DNA is real.

Now Kubu and Samantha are thrust into a harrowing race to stop a serial killer or killers and those who would pay for their special, lethal *muti*.

Questions for Discussion

1. In each of the books Kubu has had another detective working with him. For the first time Kubu (and the Botswana Criminal Investigation Department!) has a female detective. Samantha doesn't have an easy time of it and neither does he. How did you feel about the interaction between the two of them? Do you feel the initial friction helped or hindered them with resolving the case? Would you like to see more of Samantha in the future?
2. Murdering people to use parts of their bodies in black magic potions seems like something out of a dark fantasy rather than real life, yet the practice is becoming more, rather than less, prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa. Did you find this premise convincing in the way it was handled in the novel?
3. The HIV and AIDS epidemic in the country is also part of the backstory. Despite strong efforts by the government, Botswana has one of the highest infection rates in the world. This comes into the story in a number of ways. How did you feel about its direct impact on Kubu and his family?
4. The fear of the witch doctors and belief in at least some of their powers is very widespread. Did you feel this came across adequately in the novel? Were the reactions of people for example Witness believable?
5. Why do you think that the police often make little progress with cases involving the murder of people for body parts?
6. Kubu has some family issues in this book. How much influence do you think traditional family links have on Kubu? Do you find Kubu's involvement with his parents interesting, or would you rather that the story moved on more quickly?
7. After several days, Kubu has to refocus the investigation around Marumo's death because of political pressures. Do you think this was really a result of the politics, or was it a way for Kubu to raise the profile of the *muti* murder cases? Either way, do you think he was right to do it?

About the Author

Michael Stanley is the writing team of Michael Sears and Stanley Trollip. Sears was born in Johannesburg, grew up in Cape Town and Nairobi, and teaches at the University of the Witwatersrand. Trollip was also born in Johannesburg and has been on the faculty of the universities of Illinois, Minnesota, and North Dakota, and at Capella University. He divides his time between Knysna, South Africa, and Minneapolis, Minnesota.