



Death of the Mantis

By Michael Stanley
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Introduction

When a Kalahari ranger is found dead in a dry ravine, his corpse surrounded by three Bushmen, the local police arrest the nomads. Botswana's Detective Kubu Bengu investigates the case and is reunited with his old school friend Khumanego, a Bushman and advocate for his people. Khumanego claims the nomads are innocent and the arrests motivated by racist antagonism. The Bushmen are released, but soon after, more murders occur. Kubu journeys into the depths of the Kalahari to find the truth. What he discovers will test all his powers of detection and his ability to stay alive...

Questions for Discussion

1. The main theme of *Death of the Mantis* is the conflict between the Bushman peoples of the Kalahari and the government of Botswana. But this also manifests itself in the tension between an indigenous culture and a more western-oriented culture. Do you think the authors were even-handed in the ways they displayed these issues? Did you feel that you could identify with the view points of the characters on either side of this divide? What role does racism play in this type of cultural conflict?
2. People either find deserts fascinating and are keen to visit them and often return, or they dismiss them as barren and uninteresting. How do you react to arid environments? What feelings did you have about the Kalahari Desert after reading this book?
3. The traditional Bushman lifestyle is displayed in the book through the eyes of the young, and of the old, Gobiwasi. Did you feel that this was successful? Could you identify with the character? How do you think the authors went about getting into the head of a man with such a different life experience from their own?
4. Were you surprised at the Bengu family's reaction to the lobola issue? Would you have expected a modern Botswana family to follow this tradition?
5. In this book Kubu is finally taking his diet seriously/or at least Joy is! Do you think there is any hope of him losing weight by dieting? If not, what aspects of his character make him so addicted to food?
6. Kubu and Joy are delighted with their baby girl. Yet there is considerable tension generated by Tumi's needs. How would you judge the reactions of Kubu and Joy to their changed situation? One reader called Joy 'paranoid,' another said Kubu was 'insensitive'. What do you think?
7. In the story, Kubu finds himself in very dangerous situations more than once. Do you feel that he should have foreseen these events? Was his approach consistent with his background?
8. Are you able to tell which of the authors wrote which parts of the book? Have you read other mysteries written by two people? How do you think two people write fiction together?
9. Another theme in the book is the perennial search for the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Many hunt for the buried treasure of gold or diamond ore-bodies in out of the way places. Few are successful. What do you think makes people spend their lives seeking something so elusive, so against the odds? Are these characteristics displayed by Wolf Haake?
10. Recently the diamond market has been weak, yet Botswana's economy is built almost exclusively on the income from diamonds. How would you expect the country to cope with this downturn?

About the Author

Michael Stanley is the pen name of Michael Sears and Stanley Trollip, both born in South Africa. Their love of the wild parts of southern Africa spawned numerous trips to Botswana and Zimbabwe, frequently in a single-engine plane rented by Stanley, who has flown since 1969. Their first mystery novel introducing Detective Kubu and set in the south of Botswana was *A Carrion Death*, published in 2008. Kubu returned in *The Second Death of Goodluck Tinubu (A Deadly Trade outside north America)*, which was set in the lush north of the country bordering Zimbabwe. *Death of the Mantis* is the third Detective Kubu mystery.