

Short Takes – DEATH OF THE MANTIS

...a must-read for anyone who enjoys clever plotting, terrific writing, and a fascinating glimpse of today's Africa.

Charles Todd, New York Times bestselling mystery author

...the best book yet in one of the best series going... I loved this book.

Timothy Hallinan author of *The Queen of Patpong* and *A Nail Through the Heart*

...the best book I've read in a very long time... *Death of the Mantis* is a fantastic read. Brilliant!

Louise Penny multiple award-winning author of the Inspector Gamache mysteries

Impossible to put down, this immensely readable third entry from (Michael Stanley) delivers the goods. Kubu's painstaking detecting skills make him a sort of Hercule Poirot of the desert.

Library Journal starred review

Most fascinating is that the story surrounds and reveals many of the ancient traditions and current ways of the Bushman in the red Kalahari ... you will want to keep reading about the desert and its prey to the very end.

Cape Times June 3, 2011

...the authors have created a solid plot and thrown in enough curved balls to keep you turning the pages. It is an absorbing read, made more enjoyable by a cast of characters you find yourself caring about from the beginning.

Business Day June 21, 2011

The authors have gone to great pains to achieve verisimilitude in this tale of misadventure in the Kalahari sands of Botswana ... Now with three Detective Kubu, a.k.a Rra David Bengu, crime-fiction thrillers out, a firm foundation has been set for many more.

Mmegi Online June 10, 2011

Kubu himself, intelligent, honourable, a fine detective, a loyal friend, and proud family man who delights in good food and drink, is always a pleasure. In him, Trollip and Sears have created a robust and believable series character... Full marks.

The Witness July 20, 2011

Alexander McCall Smith fans interested in a different take on modern-day Botswana will find it in the intriguing third mystery (from Michael Stanley)... The cultural conflict between the Bushmen and their fellow countrymen lends color.

Publishers Weekly July 4, 2011

As in the previous titles, Stanley creates a seamless and complex mystery, replete with the unique atmosphere of modern Botswana.

Booklist August 1, 2011

Short Takes – THE SECOND DEATH OF GOODLUCK TINUBU:

...brilliant sequel to last year's *Carrion Death*.... Stanley is not content with a single plot line, effectively juggling the murders with cross-border drug smuggling and the circumstances surrounding an upcoming African Union meeting. Kubu, a dedicated gourmand, is just one of many fully fleshed and charmingly realistic characters. ...each character is memorable and adds depth to this tense and involving police procedural.

Booklist starred review May 1, 2009

...a smart, satisfying, complex mystery.

Entertainment Weekly - A rating – May 6, 2009

Detective Kubu is a real discovery: he already feels like an enduring classic to add to the mystery canon.

Killer Book Reviews Vol 6, 2009

Following his spectacular debut, *A Carrion Death*, Stanley comes roaring back with an even better tale. Bringing a love of Africa similar to Alexander McCall Smith's popular "No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency" series, the author has created an excellent new venue for those who love to read about other cultures while enjoying a good mystery. Highly recommended.

Library Journal Reviews April 1, 2009

Kubu's second case is as leisurely and well-appointed as the first... Stanley should satisfy all armchair travelers and most mystery fans.

Kirkus Reviews, April 15, 2009

It's the same country as Alexander McCall Smith's wildly popular No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency series -- but hardly the same territory. Stanley offers a lot more action "out bush," while delivering a tale every bit as evocative in its sense of a place and the people who live there.

The Times Picayune, June 8, 2009

Detective Kubu is a gift to mystery readers – he's an instant classic.

Ann Arbor Chronicle, 13 June, 2009

Kubu...is without doubt the most engaging literary detective in Africa.

The Weekender, 19 September, 2009

I was gripped and entranced from the first page. A wonderful, original voice – McCall Smith with a dark edge and even darker underbelly.

Peter James, bestselling British crime writer.

Short Takes – A CARRION DEATH:

Los Angeles Times - December 7, 2008. Favorite Crime Novels of 2008

"The gritty Botswana depicted in Michael Stanley's "A Carrion Death" (Harper) differs from Alexander McCall Smith's gentler vision, but the jovial, corpulent Det. Kubu is a winning creation."

Los Angeles Times - December 7, 2008. Favorite Crime Novels of 2008

A first novel saturated with local color. . . . Happily, Kubu is also hugely appealing—big and solid and smart enough to grasp all angles of this mystery. Readers may be lured to Africa by the landscape, but it takes a great character like Kubu to win our loyalty.

New York Times Book Review, April 13, 2008

This first novel, awash in local color, centers around shady business at a diamond mine and the land claims of the Kalahari Bushmen...

New York Times Book Review – Paperback Row Review, April 26, 2009

Delightful. . . . Plot twists are fair and well-paced, the Botswana setting has room to breathe and take shape as its own entity, and Stanley's writing style is equal parts sprightly and grave.

Los Angeles Times Book Review,

Characters in this first outing are utterly believable, for good or ill. . . . Kubu himself is a marvellous creation, his distinctive characteristics. . . as well considered as the plot. ...This is a marvellous debut, and with any luck, Kubu's next outing will be as filling and tasty as one of the large man's dream meals.

Boston Globe April 14, 2008

A Carrion Death by Michael Stanley (Headline), set in Botswana, is a brutal antidote to Alexander McCall Smith's cosy No.1 Ladies' detective Agency series. Detective Kubu investigates a brutal murder linked to vast sums of money involved in gem-trading, together with family upheavals and rivalries at which King Lear's nasty daughters would blanch. There are diabolically cunning tricks to deceive the cops (and family members), but Kubu is not to be fooled, in a plot climaxing in a series of whizzbang surprises.

The intricate plotting, a grisly sense of realism and numerous topical motifs ...make this a compulsively readable novel.

Publishers Weekly (starred review), February 25, 2008

[A] fast-moving story... Rich with the atmosphere of modern Botswana, and peopled with interesting and well-drawn characters, this is an exciting debut.

Booklist, February 1, 2008

Kubu follows in the literary footsteps of ... brilliant male detective with a love of classical music, a palate for good food and fine wine, distant but compassionate, who solves crimes with reason and resolve. . . . This is a deliciously satisfying first mystery.

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, April 19, 2008

This well-plotted debut introduces a new mystery series and will enthrall readers...
Library Journal, March 1, 2008

...David "Kubu" Bengu of the Botswana C.I.D.—is more exotic still, and in ways that continue to surprise and delight from beginning to end ...
Ellenville Shawangunk Journal/Sullivan County Democrat (NY State), March 26, 2009

There are diabolically cunning tricks to deceive the cops, but Kubu is not to be fooled, in a plot climaxing in a series of whizz-bang surprises.
The Scotsman, November 29, 2008

A Carrion Death is that perfect combination of “I don’t want it to end” and “I can’t put it down”. Great African crime fiction.
Deon Meyer, leading South African crime writer.

Larger Extracts:

DEATH OF THE MANTIS

Page turner from start to finish

Charles Todd, New York Times bestselling mystery author

Assistant Superintendent Kubu is back! In *Death of the Mantis*, a killer stalks the Kalahari Desert—and it's a page turner from start to finish. Michael Stanley's enthralling series with its very likable Botswana policeman is a must-read for anyone who enjoys clever plotting, terrific writing, and a fascinating glimpse of today's Africa. Kubu, *Death of the Mantis*, Michael Stanley: the perfect mystery trifecta for any crime fan."

I loved this book

Timothy Hallinan author of *The Queen of Patpong* and *A Nail Through the Heart*

Death of the Mantis is the best book yet in one of the best series going: a serious novel with a mystery at its core that takes us places we've never been, thrills and informs us, and leaves us changed by the experience. I loved this book.

Brilliant!

Louise Penny multiple award-winning author of the Inspector Gamache mysteries

"Death of the Mantis, by Michael Stanley, is the best book I've read in a very long time. I'm fascinated by Africa and now I really want to visit Botswana. Through this book, I've come to love the people there, and fall totally for the main character – a policeman, nicknamed Kubu, the Setswana name for Hippo. He is gentle, wise and loyal to his family, his colleagues and his friends. He is altogether a lovely man. Death of the Mantis is a fantastic read. Brilliant!"

Impossible to put down

Library Journal starred review

As the secret lives of the victims are revealed, the variety of possible motives expands at a dizzying pace. Kubu is forced to re-evaluate the evidence and make hard choices. VERDICT Impossible to put down, this immensely readable third entry from (Michael Stanley) delivers the goods. Kubu's painstaking detecting skills make him a sort of Hercule Poirot of the desert. Grimmer than Alexander McCall Smith's Precious Ramotswe mysteries but not oppressively violent, this series can be recommended to a wide gamut of readers.

Seamless and complex mystery

Booklist August 1, 2011

The third Detective Kubu mystery finds the genial Kubu having a hard time adjusting his lifestyle of fine wine and good food to accommodate the arrival of his long-awaited baby girl and the stress on both him and his wife of being new parents. When a murder in the Kalahari is blamed on the three Bushmen who found the body,

Kubu is only too happy to take off for a few days to help out his old school friend, now an advocate for the Bushmen. As the investigation progresses, Kubu is drawn deeper into the hot, dangerous, and mysterious Kalahari, chasing a killer and the legendary source of the Namibian diamonds. As in the previous titles, Stanley creates a seamless and complex mystery, replete with the unique atmosphere of modern Botswana.

THE SECOND DEATH OF GOODLUCK TINUBU

Brilliant sequel

Booklist starred review May 1, 2009

...Kubu stars in a brilliant sequel to last year's *Carrion Death*. ...Stanley is not content with a single plot line, effectively juggling the murders with cross-border drug smuggling and the circumstances surrounding an upcoming African Union meeting. Kubu, a dedicated gourmand, is just one of many fully fleshed and charmingly realistic characters. From slightly annoying sister-in-law Peasant to Kubu's intense and acerbic boss Mabuku to Scottish pathologist MacGregor, each character is memorable and adds depth to this tense and involving police procedural. Suggest to fans of *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* series, who will appreciate Kubu's laid-back style and happy home life, and to Henning Mankell fans, who will respond to the complex plots and palpable sense of place.

Detective Kubu has found his own pace!

Clea Simon March 4, 2009

If you liked *A CARRION DEATH*, you're in for a real treat with *THE SECOND DEATH OF GOODLUCK TINUBU*. I thoroughly enjoyed the first book, but in the second all the diverse elements -- the harder-edged crime (a multiple murder at a tourist camp) and the cozier parts of Detective Kubu's character (he's still enjoying his meals, only not quite as often, plus we hear more about his family and background) -- seem to come together better. I feel like the authors have found a better compromise and Detective Kubu has found his own pace!

Rich novel

Ann Arbor Chronicle June 13, 2009

The settings in the book are so gorgeously rendered you can almost see and hear them, and obviously the writers have a deep love for their subject. ... This is a very rich novel -- rich setting, rich characters, and many of them with a complicated story that is told in a kind of laid back way. The author has his own rhythm, but if you give yourself time to adjust to it (as with a Tony Hillerman novel, for example) the pleasures are many.

Detective Kubu is a gift to mystery readers -- he's an instant classic. These books are a shade darker than McCall-Smith's, including rape, drugs, and several brutal

murders, but the surroundings are just as comfortable. Somehow, only two outings in, I feel certain that Kubu will get to the bottom of everything.

Most engaging literary detective in Africa

The Weekender September 19, 2009

Move over Mma Ramotswe: there's a new player in town, none other than Gaborone's Assistant Supt David "Kubu" Bengu, of the Botswana Criminal Investigation department, and he is without doubt the most engaging literary detective in Africa. ... To make use of a horribly abused and overused cliché, the story is as fresh as tomorrow's headlines and as refreshing as a cold beer, at sunset, in the hot African bush.

A CARRION DEATH

This is a marvellous debut...

Boston Globe April 14, 2008

... readers ... will be rewarded by a complicated police procedural that's more smart than bloody, particularly once Detective David Bengu, nicknamed "Kubu," is called in. So-called because his immense girth reminded an old school chum of a hippo, "kubu" in Setswana, this detective has both the seemingly slow and gentle manner and the underlying ferocity of his namesake. Like such great fictional detectives as Guido Brunetti (from Donna Leon's Venetian series), Kubu appreciates the finer things in life, including good food, music, and the love of his intelligent wife, Joy.

The story, with its interlocking strands, is complicated but well thought-out, with clues that will have readers flipping back chapters to check alibis and opportunities. ... most of the characters in this first outing are utterly believable, for good or ill. And many, including Kubu's new friend, Professor Bongani Sibisi, hold great promise as series regulars. Kubu himself is a marvelous creation, his distinctive characteristics - his weight, his taste in music - as well considered as the plot. And if his Botswana is more violent than McCall Smith's, it is depicted with its distinctive beauty intact as well. This is a marvelous debut, and with any luck, Kubu's next outing will be as filling and tasty as one of the large man's dream meals.

The complete picture...

Sarah Weinman, Los Angeles Times, April 13, 2008

Assistant Superintendent David Bengu . . . shares a number of traits with McCall Smith's signature heroine. His nickname, "Kubu," is Setswanan for "hippopotamus," suggesting a traditional build confirmed by his penchant for wearing African shirts, size XXXL. His marriage to Joy is built upon the same practical foundations of love that bind Precious Ramotswe to her garage-owning husband, J.L.B. Maketoni. And like Precious, Kubu takes a warm-hearted approach to life's incidentals -- especially if they happen to be accompanied by heaping plates of food.

But Stanley, the merged name of the South African writing team of Michael Sears and Stanley Trollip, makes clear early on that Kubu will travel down darker and more ghastly paths than Precious ever does. But then, murder investigation is Kubu's job, and the discovery of two bodies in the wild with almost all possible identification marks eliminated means that the job quickly involves sifting through a labyrinthine mosaic of diamond smuggling, family strife and generations of closely guarded secrets that the Kalahari Desert cannot contain anymore.

"A Carrion Death" gets much right: The plot twists are fair and well-placed, the Botswana setting has room to breathe and take shape as its own entity, and Stanley's writing style is equal parts sprightly and grave. Perhaps there needn't be so much concentration on Kubu's home life, but when he lets his jovial nature recede and talks instead of how murder "never works out quite the way you expect," it forces the reader to look alongside him for the complete picture -- one that should take shape over several series installments.

Deliciously satisfying...

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, April 19, 2008

Set in Botswana, this debut novel introduces Detective David 'Kubu' Bengu of the Botswana Criminal Investigation Department. Kubu follows in the literary footsteps of Christie's Poirot and Conan Doyle's Holmes - brilliant male detective with a love of classical music, a palate for good food and fine wine, distant but compassionate, who solves crimes with reason and resolve.

...[Michael Stanley's] knowledge of Botswana, its history and its traditions, permeates every page.

...This is a deliciously satisfying first mystery. I want seconds.

Well-plotted debut...

Library Journal, March 1, 2008

This well-plotted debut introduces a new mystery series and will enthrall readers, who should be aware that the author's detailing of the cultural and social background of the Botswana people shares equal footing with the solving of the murders. Stanley is the writing duo of South Africans Michael Sears and Stanley Trollip, who have shared adventures in the Kalahari. For readers who enjoy crime novels with African settings, such as those by Richard Kunzmann and Deon Meyer.

A compulsively readable novel...

Publishers Weekly (starred review), February 25th, 2008

This impressive debut from Stanley, the South African writing team of Michael Sears and Stanley Trollip, introduces overweight assistant superintendent David Bengu of the Botswana Police Department, whose nickname is, fittingly, Kubu (Setswanan for hippopotamus). In investigating the case of a partially consumed human body found in a remote area of a game reserve, Kubu keeps running across tangential links to Botswana Cattle and Mining, the country's largest company. As more people connected to the case turn up dead, Kubu realizes that multiple murder may be just the byproduct of a much more heinous crime. The intricate plotting, a grisly sense of realism and numerous topical motifs (the plight of the Kalahari Bushmen, diamond smuggling, poaching, the homogenization of African culture, etc.) make this a compulsively readable novel. Despite a shared setting with Alexander McCall Smith's No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency series, this fast-paced forensic thriller will resonate more with fans of Patricia Cornwell's Kay Scarpetta. (Apr.)

Culture conscious mystery...

Madison County Herald, April 26, 2008

...Michael Stanley introduces the reader to detective Kubu, the nickname for Assistant Superintendent David Bengu of the Botswana Criminal Investigation Department. Kubu is Setswana for hippo; a playful appellation for his enormous girth and quick resourcefulness. Kubu loves his beautiful wife, fine food and wine, and classical music, which he sings aloud when travelling the bush to investigate crimes. The hyena-gnawed remains of a man are discovered near a water hole on the Central Kalahari Game Reserve in Botswana. Forensics indicate murder; the body was dumped for quick devouring. Now Kubu must question reluctant suspects, including the wealthy and devious family that runs one of Botswana's leading diamond mining companies. Poaching, political cover-ups, tribal rivalry and power-hungry scoundrels leave a blood soaked trail that even Kubu has difficulty trudging through.

A Carrion Death produces a fascinating protagonist and a culture-conscious mystery debut for Michael Stanley.

Likable and durable character...

(South African) Sunday Times, June 8, 2008

Set in Botswana, the world's largest producer, by value, of gems, the most valuable assets by far are not the stones mined at the Maboane diamond mine — or even the Angolan blood diamonds that also feature — but that large Black Diamond, aka assistant inspector David Bengu of the Botswana CID. As is the case with tulips, black diamonds are the most valuable.

For Michael Stanley have introduced a likeable and durable character in the shape of an opera singing (to himself, in the car), gourmet guzzling, larger-than-life (his nickname Kubu means hippo in Setswana) original. *A Carrion Death* is surely the first instalment in a successful franchise.

All the boxes get ticked: exotic desert locations, bloodthirsty villains and beautiful girls, blackmail, more twists in the plot than a pretzel and, of course, murders most foul, galore.

In all, a remarkable debut and sure to be a successful one...

Most readers happily turning the pages...

Canberra Times June 28, 2008

A Carrion Death is an impressive murder mystery with a great detective ... [whose] approach to crime-solving is delicate and cerebral. His investigation of the discovery of a half-eaten body in a waterhole near a local resort takes the reader on an entertaining journey through Botswana. The fluid writing and fascinating description of the Botswana countryside, and its people, will keep most readers happily turning the pages. Even the simplest interactions, such as Bengu's visit to his parents, are full of interest and totally engaging. The criminal elements are also well handled and the multiple viewpoints employed by Stanley add to the mounting suspense. In all a well-written and highly recommended debut mystery.

The police procedural story line is superb...

Genre Go Round Reviews, February 9, 2008

Near a waterhole in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, Botswana, game rangers Andries and Bongani find the partial human remains; as the best cleaners of a crime scene, hyenas were not quite finished devouring the corpse. The rangers collected enough evidence to make the case that a homicide not a tragic accident occurred. Botswana Criminal Investigation Department Assistant Superintendent David "Kubu" Bengu leads the investigation. As Kubu follows clues partially concealed by local superstition and more so by powerful killers with high level contacts intent on hiding the crime and much more, he mimics the "hippopotamus" that he is nicknamed for as he calmly but resolutely makes inquiries. With Mozart and other classical greats to entertain him as he drives the dusty roads, Kubu risks his life from those who will kill anyone including a persistent detective's loved ones to keep the truth from surfacing. The police procedural story line is superb with a strong obstinate hero; however the tale belongs to the insightful look at Botswana, a landlocked South African presidential representative democratic republic. The action-packed story line brings to life the people and cultures of a country struggling to avoid the problems besetting many of their neighbors to include tribal rivalries, government corruption, and avaricious poachers and smugglers ripping off the natural resources. The author team Michael Stanley provides the excellent debut of a police detective and readers will clamor for more investigations by this lover of the Magic Flute.

The realistic characters could step off the pages and shake your hand...

ReaderToReader Reviews, June 22, 2008

...The mix of characters are those involved with the resort, owners of a diamond mine, and travelers as well as locals. They move in well described settings that bring life to the story. If you want to visit Africa, this book is an excellent way to get a feeling for this part of it. The realistic characters could step off the pages and shake your hand.

...The story contains several motives for wanting a person to disappear--blackmail, theft of diamonds, control of a company, love, and others. The victim or killer could be any one of the many characters of the story and they will have you and Kubu guessing.

Highly recommended. A Carrion Death is one of those books you may read again to pick up things missed on the first reading.

[A] fast-moving story...

Booklist, February 1, 2008

Assistant Superintendent David Bengu earned his nickname, Kubu (hippopotamus), for his size, generally amiable nature, and occasional ferocity, all of which are evident in this lengthy but fast-moving story, the debut of writing team Michael Sears and Stanley Trollip. Kubu is called out to a remote tourist camp in Botswana when the manager finds a hyena chewing on human remains. What first seems to be a simple case of death by desert turns into something much more complex, as the Botswana Cattle and Mining Company turns up in every corner. Soon people start to go missing, beginning with a geologist whose specialty is diamonds. Rich with the atmosphere of modern Botswana, and peopled with interesting and well-drawn characters, this is an exciting debut, which will leave readers looking forward to reading the next investigation of Assistant Superintendent Kubu. Recommend to readers who like the Botswana setting of Alexander McCall Smith's stories and all readers who enjoy international police procedurals with a strong sense of place.