

# READING GROUP GUIDE

## Corban Addison's **THE GARDEN OF BURNING SAND**

1. Zoe says she thinks of Africa as her real home, yet many times during the story, she is reminded that she is indeed an outsider in Zambia. How does the fact that Zoe is American affect the investigation and her relationships with other characters?
2. During the investigation, elements from modern and ancient Africa are pitted against each other: DNA testing and modern medicine versus traditional tribal healers, science versus old superstitions, pre-colonial African culture versus western capitalism and materialism. Discuss how these elements interact in the book.
3. Why does Zoe ultimately decide to be with Joseph, knowing his HIV status? Discuss the role of HIV in the relationships between the characters in the book. What choice would you make?
4. How does Zoe's past come into play in the investigation of Kuyeya's rapist? Do you think her personal connection to the crime clouds her judgment, or emboldens her to find the truth no matter what?
5. Discuss the status of sexual crimes in the book and beyond. What sets these crimes apart from other types of assault? How does such a crime impact not only the victim, but families and communities?
6. How does Addison portray the way foreign aid money and healthcare is controlled by the American government and

charitable institutions like Zoe's mother's? What impact does foreign aid have in communities like Kuyeya's?

7. Darious and his family are depicted in the book as capable and willing to interfere in the case using bribery, deception, hired thugs, and even lethal violence. How does corruption play a part in daily life in Zambia? How do the different characters react, bend to, or resist this corruption?