

# Tea Time for the Traditionally Built

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## **Tea Time for the Traditionally Built** Alexander McCall Smith

The latest installment of this universally beloved and best-selling series finds Precious Ramotswe in personal need of her own formidable detection talents . . . .

Mma Ramotswe's ever-ready tiny white van has recently developed a rather disturbing noise. Of course, Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni-her estimable husband and one of Botswana's most talented mechanics--is the man to turn to for help. But Precious suspects he might simply condemn the van and replace it with something more modern. Can she find a way to save her old friend?

In the meantime, Mma Makutsi discovers that her old rival Violet Sephotho, who could not have gotten more than fifty percent on her typing final at the Botswana Secretarial College, has set her sights on none other than Mma Makutsi's fiancé, Phuti Radiphuti. Can Mma Ramotswe's intuition save the day? Finally, the proprietor of a local football team has enlisted the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency to help explain its dreadful losing streak. The owner of the team is convinced he has a traitor in his midst. But how is Mma Ramotswe, who has never seen a football match in her life, going to discern who is throwing the game? Help, it turns out, may come from an unexpected quarter.

There are few mysteries that can't be solved and fewer problems that can't be fixed when the irrepressible Precious Ramotswe puts her mind to them. A good cup of red bush tea might be the best solution of all.

## **Tea Time for the Traditionally Built Details**


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# From Reader Review Tea Time for the Traditionally Built for online ebook

## Sandy says

I really enjoy this series of books. I like the descriptions, the slow pace, the thoughtfulness, etc. And the stories are always interesting. There were lots of quotes I found interesting as well...

In thinking about her childhood, Mma Ramotswe pondered "arithmetic, with its puzzling multiplication tables that needed to be learned by heart--when there was so much else that the heart had to learn." (pg. 4)

As Mma Ramotswe looked up at her acacia tree and thought about how there could be a snake in the tree, she decided that the best way to deal with them was "not to deal with them...If we left snakes alone, then they kept away from us. It was only when we intruded on their world that they bit us, and who could blame them for that? It was the same with life in general, thought Mma Ramotswe. If we worried away at troublesome issues, we often only ended up making things worse. It was far better to let things sort themselves out." (pg. 18) This reminds me of advice from Dale Carnegie's book "How to Stop Worrying and Start Living". To paraphrase, he stated that if we could do something about a problem that was bothering us, then we should do something! If there was nothing we could do, then we should figure out what would be the worst possible thing that might happen, reconcile ourselves to it and then quit worrying. Chances were that whatever happened wouldn't be as bad as it could have been.

When Fanwell talks to Mma Ramotswe about her van, which is on its last legs, he asks her if she has spoken to her husband about it. He says there is nothing her husband can not fix. She sighs and thinks to herself that "he was right to say that there was nothing that Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni could not fix, but that was not the same thing as saying that there was nothing that he would not fix." (pg. 59) I had to laugh at that. My mother was very impressed with my husband, Bart, and used to say that there was nothing that Bart couldn't do if he set his mind to it. (I often repeat this, but add emphasis to the "set his mind to it" part which, to me, is the crux of the matter.)

Another thought, not unlike the earlier one I mentioned about the snakes, was when Mma Ramotswe was walking and thought "the blister had stopped troubling her; it had burst, she thought, and walking was comfortable again. If only all our troubles were like that; and perhaps they were. Perhaps the trick was to do what was necessary to deal with them, to put a plaster on them and then forget that they were there." (pg. 61)

And on a similar note--"When there is nothing you can do to stop the march of adverse events, then the best thing, she felt, was to get on with life and not to worry." (pg. 99)

And some quotes on a variety of topics--

"'Everyone needs a hobby,' said Mma Ramotswe. 'Particularly men. They need hobbies because they do not have enough to do. We women always have too much to do and do not have to spend our time watching football or playing with...collecting model aeroplanes.'" (pg. 76)

"She knew it was not always easy for women in such places, where the easy companionship of the village had been replaced by the comparative anonymity of the town. Such a woman might spend much of the day without any contact with other women--an unnatural state of affairs. We are born to talk to other people, she thought; we are born to be sociable and to sit together with others in the shade of an acacia tree and talk

about things that happened the day before. We were not born to sit in kitchens by ourselves, with no body to chat to." (pg. 127)

"A middle-aged couple, visitors wearing large floppy hats, sat at a table poring over a tourist guide. Mma Makutsi smiled; so many people read these guides when they might have been looking around them and seeing the place they were reading about. It was the same with cameras; visitors spent so much time peering through the viewfinders of their cameras that they never looked at the country they were photographing." (pg. 165) Reminds me of when Michael and I went to Sea World and he video taped the killer whale show, but to one extent missed seeing it except through the tiny black and white viewfinder.

And a funny one... Mma Makutsi is worried about losing her fiancée to another woman and asks "What if she succeeds in making him fonder of her? What then? He is a good man, but even a good man can fall for a glamorous woman. That is well known.

Mma Ramotswe responds "That is very well known...Look at Adam. Look how he fell for Eve.

"Just because she had no clothes on, he fell for her,'said Mma Makutsi.

"That sometimes helps,' said Mma Ramotswe. They both laughed..."

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## **Terri says**

This is one of the authors/series (along with Janet Evanovich and John Grisham) whose books I await eagerly and insist on owning. And I am never disappointed. How I love Mma Ramotswe and this endearing cast of characters (Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni, Mma Makutsi, Phuti Radiphuti, Violet Sephotho, and all the rest - it is a real treat to hear the audio version of these books - the names just roll off the tongue - so beautiful)! And it is so refreshing to read a book set in Africa in which people go about their everyday lives with such joy. The love for Botswana and its people is palpable in the pages of Smith's books. Though the books in the "No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency" series are classed as mysteries, they are gentle examples of the genre. The focus really is on the characters and the loving, simple, slow lives they lead. The humor, too, is gentle but so wonderful. I especially love the idea of the "traditionally built" woman, as opposed to the slim "modern" women discussed in the book. There is so much to smile about when reading these books. I savor every moment and am so sorry when the books are done!

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## **Julie says**

Delightful! I haven't read a #1 Ladies Detective Agency novel in several years, and I had forgotten how enjoyable they are. This is one of the best. As always, I love Lisette Lecat's narration; she does all of the voices so well!

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## **Marcy says**

Once again, Alexander McCall Smith has written another wonderful detective book about the Mma Ramotswe and Mma Makutsi. McCall has such a wonderful sense of people and how they think; In simple

words, he delves into their innermost reflective thoughts. As he describes in detail what people are thinking about, I find myself connecting to similar thoughts I used to have when I was younger and innocent, and had more free time to reflect upon the goodness of people and the world.

Mma Ramotswe "glanced in her rear-view mirror...Goodnight, Mma: I am grateful to you. I am grateful to you for being my assistant and having all those peculiar ideas and insisting on them. I am grateful to you for being who you are; for standing up for ladies with large glasses and a bad skin and for everybody else who has had to battle to get where they have got. And most of all I am grateful to you for being my friend, Mma; I am grateful to you for that. That is the best thing that anybody can be to anybody else - a friend."

Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni was thoughtful when his son was rather upset that a better football team had lost:

" There would have to be a lesson about sportsmanship, and about enjoying a game, no matter what the outcome. It was sometimes a hard lesson to be learned, and some people never learned it, but it was needed. He looked at Puso and tried to remember what it was like to be that age. You wanted things so much-that was it: you wanted things so much that you ached. And sometimes you believed that you could make the things you yearned for happen, just by willing them. He had done that himself-he remembered it vividly, when as a boy he had lost a favorite uncle and he had walked out into the bush and looked up at the sky and addressed God directly: Please make him not be dead. Please make him not be dead. And when he had got home, he had half expected that his act of willing would have somehow worked and his uncle would have miraculously recovered. But of course there was still the sound of keening women and the black armbands and all the other signs that it had not worked; the world is the world in spite of all our wishes to the contrary."

Keep writing, Alexander McCall Smith!

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## **Will Byrnes says**

The 10th in the series, if you are reading this you are already a fan. Smith maintains the same delightful level offered in the prior nine. The central mystery here concerns a soccer team and whether or not someone is throwing games. Mma Makutsi faces a personal challenge as an old rival attempts to insinuate herself between Makutsi and her fiancée. Mma Rawotswe must come to grips with the likely demise of her beloved van. Along the way we meet more of the fascinating characters that populate Smith's Botswana and paint a loving portrait of that nation. If the other books in the series were not your cup of bush tea, pass, but if you enjoyed what came before settle in with another cup and enjoy.

It does not hurt that the wonderful HBO production of these stories has given us a few wonderfully cast faces to keep in mind as we read.

Just in case you are new to the series. I would stop, go back and read The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency. It makes a difference seeing the characters develop over the volumes.

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## **Nan says**

Alexander McCall Smith has done it again with his latest installment in the No. 1 Ladies Detective series,

Tea Time for the Traditionally Built. There are mysteries to solve, troubles with the trusty old white van, and Mma Makutsi's arch-enemy Violet Sephotho makes a dastardly reappearance.

One of the most touching parts of this novel is the deep love that Mma Ramotswe expresses for her husband, Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni. At one point in the story she is worried about him driving the roads of Botswana late at night when it can be dangerous. She describes the worry she has in a way that really resonates with me. Who doesn't know this feeling?

"Mma Ramotswe felt herself overcome by a sudden feeling of vulnerability, by a fear that her familiar world was hanging by a thread. We were tiny creatures, really; tiny and afraid, trying to hold our place on the little platform that was our earth. So while the world about us might seem so solid, so permanent, it was not really. . . . Somewhere in this country, somewhere in Botswana that day, somebody had been given news that would end their little world. Somebody, some unknown person somewhere, was being told that somebody else was not coming back. And all that stood between that poor person and oneself was chance, and luck, and forces that we would never master or understand. What if it was she who would be the recipient of such news this night? No, she could not think about that, she would not. But it could happen, couldn't it?"

Thankfully, Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni makes it home that night. As I sit here typing this, though, I hear sirens outside my window. There is something in her anguish of worry, even when telling herself that she must not worry, that is completely human. It is completely an aspect of self. It makes Precious Ramotswe one's dear friend, and part of our own psyche.

Growing up, I used to hear ambulances occasionally head down an adjacent street toward the hospital. Yes, I was a little worrier. To cope with it, I would say a silent prayer, "Go with God." (Okay, I still do this.) And I would have to let the worry go . . . knowing as Mma Ramotswe articulated, that someone, somewhere may be having a traumatic change in their life that would be very bad or very sad. I also knew that sometimes the person or people would be okay. Ultimately, we have to let it go. (Tell me that when I am up in the middle of the night worrying - irrationally - when Tom and Matt are camping or when Matt is on a sleepover.)

There are the usual very funny moments in the book too, usually involving Grace Makutsi, and all in all, this is another delightful novel in this never-disappointing series. Tom and I have recently been watching some of the episodes of the HBO series that came out last year, based on the books, thanks to Tom's sister who taped them for us. I know that people can love the television program without ever having read the books, but I have to guess that the enjoyment of watching the show after having read the books is amplified. The quality of the filming, the music, the setting, and the meticulous casting is very high. I recommend not only the books, but the HBO series.

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## Donna says

Amazon.com kindly informed me that this latest in the No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency series was available in paperback, and I started clicking. This is one temptation I don't even try to resist. Alexander McCall Smith's books are good for me—like a few days' vacation.

Once it arrived, I tried to read *Tea Time for the Traditionally Built* as slowly as possible, rationing myself to just a few pages a day. Although Smith is a prolific author, his books don't come out every day and—like favorite desserts—when they're gone they're gone.

For those familiar with the series, you might be interested to know that in this volume, readers have a chance to get to know some of the here-to-fore minor characters—including the younger apprentice, the tiny white van, and Mma Makutsi's shoes.

For those of you unfamiliar with the series, I recommend the first book in the series, *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*. If you like it as much as I did, prepare yourself for a long vacation.

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## **Graham says**

Can this really be the tenth installment in this endearing book series already? It can, and Smith shows no signs of flagging yet: *TEA TIME FOR THE TRADITIONALLY BUILT* is another whimsical and gently moving story about the various misadventures of Mma Ramotswe, the proud owner of the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency, and her various friends and associates.

It's business as usual in this well-paced read as the central characters attempt to solve a football mystery: why is a local and well-respected team always losing all of a sudden? Suspicions of match-fixing abound, and the investigation is as engaging as ever. Along the way, Smith takes time to flesh out some of the supporting characters a bit more (particularly in the case of the previously-unnamed second apprentice, Fanwell).

This is a solid read as ever, although there are few inconsistencies that stop it from being one of the best. Firstly, the inclusion of a stock villain character (and a long-running one at that) is a little incongruous given the tone of the rest of the story; I'm hoping to see them become a little less one-dimensional in the future. Secondly, there are some long passages of creeping sentimentality that crop up in the second half and seem to be there just to pad out the remaining pages. I think Smith was trying a little too hard, as the result feels unnatural and out of tone with the gentle philosophy found in the rest of this series.

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## **Rachael says**

As always, this was a pleasure to read. The characters have become like old friends, complete with their own particular quirks. They are so fully fleshed out that they seem as though they must be real! I can't tell you how much Mma Makutsi made me laugh out loud this time. It was also fun to finally learn more about "the younger apprentice" in Mr J L B Matekoni's garage. The cases in this installment were very benign, and sources of real amusement. I just love Alexander McCall Smith and am so thankful I found this series (was it 6 years ago, or 7 already?). They are always a joy to read, and I hope there will be at least 10 more! :) I wish I could get everyone to read these books.

For me, it is also interesting to see how Botswana's culture and customs compare with those in Lesotho, especially in this novel, in which Mma Ramotswe and Mma Makutsi discuss some customs that are actually identical to what my husband has taught me (or I observed during our trip there).

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## **Angie says**

A fun, feel good book that happens to be number 10 in a fun, feel good series based in Botswana. Mma Ramotswe & Mma Makutsi never fail to bring a smile to my face. I love the culture and ambience of their Botswana. AMS' writing makes the place come alive through the eyes of natives to the country. These books are easy and quick reading.

This particular entry focuses on intrigue in a football team (soccer to us Americans). Also are problems with the "tiny white van" and Grace's nemesis Violet Sephotho.

If you are a fan of any of these books and haven't yet had the opportunity to watch the HBO series inspired by it, please do so. I highly recommend it. It's one of those times I feel that the tv/movie version is as good as the book. Let me tell you, that doesn't often happen for me. In fact I can pretty much count them on one hand. The spirit of the books is beautifully maintained in them.

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## **Barbara says**

In this 10th book in the series, Mma Ramotswe - owner of the No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency in Gabarone, Botswana - has a vexing problem. Her beloved tiny white van is making ominous noises. And Mma Ramotswe's afraid her husband, the dedicated mechanic Mr. JLB Matekonii, will scrap the old van if she tells him.

Mma Ramotswe's car problems prey on her mind as she looks into the case of the losing football (soccer) team. Rra Molofololo, the team owner, is convinced a traitorous player is throwing games. Mma Ramotswe - out of her depth since she knows nothing about football - nevertheless agrees to try to unearth the culprit. Thus the detective goes to a football game, talks to the team members, listens to players blame each other, and so on - all the time pondering the hold sports have on 'boys' of all ages.

Meanwhile, assistant detective Mma Makutsi is worried about losing her fiancé, Phuti Rhadiputi - owner of many cattle and The Double Comfort Furniture Store. The problem: glamorous vamp Violet Sephotho has wangled a job at the furniture shop and Mma Makutsi thinks Violet will try to get her claws into Phuti. And sneaky Violet plans to do exactly that.

The usual recurring characters make an appearance in the story, including Mma Potokwane, manager of the orphan farm and baker of delicious fruit cakes; and apprentice mechanics Charlie and Fanwell. In fact, Fanwell is especially helpful to Mma Ramotswe in this book, and the detective visits Fanwell's tiny house and meets the array of relatives he supports with his small salary.

As always in this charming series many cups of bush tea are drunk, the ladies engage in entertaining conversations, and Mma Makutsi boldly expresses her strong, amusing (and often wrongheaded) opinions about everything. Moreover, the reader gets a peek at the gentle culture of Botswana, which seems like a very nice place to live.

I'd highly recommend this book to fans of quiet cozy mysteries.



You can follow my reviews at <http://reviewsbybarbsaffer.blogspot.com/>

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## **Andrew says**

A very entertaining book in this cozy and comfortable series. These books are so easy going that you can't help enjoying them, it is like being back with long lost friends. The main mystery in this one is very light revolving around why a football team is always losing and whether there is a traitor in amongst the team. The mysteries in these books are almost secondary to life in Botswana as told by Mma Ramotswe. This book is worth reading alone for the reaction she had to her dying little van. Can't wait to be back with the characters in the next book.

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## **Laura says**

*From BBC Radio 4 - Afternoon Drama:*

*Written and dramatised by Alexander McCall Smith, from his hugely popular series of books set in Botswana.*

*Precious Ramotswe, owner of The No 1 Ladies' Detective Agency, is about to get in over her head. She's got an important new client from the incomprehensible world of football, but she's on her own as her loyal assistant Mma Makutsi is distracted by the return of a troublesome figure from her past.*

*Directed by Eilidh McCreadie.*

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## **Laura says**

Second review:

I'm not sure what I can say about any book in this series that I've not already said. If Botswana weren't an extremely hot and dry place, I'd want to move there, if the author represents it accurately. Civility rules! Is everyone kind? No, but people treat each other with dignity and civility.

The world could learn a lot from Mma Ramotswe. She feels so real to me. Her assistant is a little more plucky but I may love her even more. She makes me laugh. I also really enjoyed getting to know Fanwell more in this volume.

The stories are always interesting, but it's the characters and setting that shine in this series. You come to know these characters so well, and though they may not all be favorites, there is something to love about every one of them.

Audiobook listeners will love this series, as each volume is narrated by the magnificent Lisette Lecat. She does each voice, male and female, convincingly, and adds another layer of excellence to this series. Bravo! Long live AMS and Lecat!

Really looking forward to the 18th volume of this series next month. Until then, on to the next!

First review:

I just love this series. They're all good, filled with wisdom.

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### **Kavita says**

I am doing this wrong. I ought to read the books in the right order to get the full enjoyment of the character development. As it is, I was kicking myself for missing an exciting book (no idea which of the previous ones it was, but the scene was referred to in this one) with Grace Makutsi and Precious Ramotswe chasing after Violet Sephotho. How did I miss that?

Anyway, this one had Ramotswe and Makutsi grapple with football. The owner of a football club, the Kalahari Swoopers, reaches out to the ladies and asks if they could find out why his team is consistently losing. He suspects there is a traitor in their midst. Mma Ramotswe takes up the case even though neither of the women know anything about the game. The conclusion, as usual, is simple and straightforward.

Meanwhile, Violet Sephotho has her eyes on Phuti Radiphuti and Mma Makutsi is furious about it. But between her, Mma Ramotswe and Charlie, they put things right and save poor Phuti from a fate worse than death. So much benign sexism here, but I just adore this series! I have to let it go!

Another winner from Botswana. Settle down with a hot cup of bush tea and enjoy!

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### **Smitha says**

4.5 stars

I love this series, and am a huge fan of McCall Smith.

Though the events take place in a detective agency, this series is as far away from murder and hard crime as any detective book can be.

Mma Ramotswe and her assistant, Mma Makutsi, form an unlikely pair of female detectives, who specialise in solving peculiar mysteries.

This time, Molofololo, the football tycoon engages the team to find out why his team is losing out every time, even to weak rivals. He suspects a mole in the team, and it is Precious Ramotswe's job to find out the culprit. Though not even remotely a football fan, she is forced to learn the ABC of football with the help of her young son, Puso and is soon interviewing the players with the help of Makutsi. But when the solution is reached at, it is quite a simple and astonishing one.

In between I got a glimpse of Botswana life, and Precious Ramotswe's day to day affairs, and I could also peek into the garage owned by her husband, Mr. JLB Matekoni.

The best thing about this book and the whole series is the subtle humor and the simple language.

How I adore such books!

Would have given full 5 stars, but for the silly solution to the mystery.

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## Aaron says

Precious Ramotswe is back for another adventure as she delves into the world of football, which we Americans confusedly call soccer. She has been hired by Mr. Mologololo, the owner of the local Kalahari Swoopers, because he has some serious concerns about the bad record of the team. Considering the high level of talent on the team, he thinks that one or more of the players is doing something to make the team lose. He hasn't been able to sort out who it is, but he thinks that Mma Ramotswe's skills as a detective will allow her to root out the offender quickly.

Mma Ramotswe's assistant is finding herself being drawn into her first domestic trouble. Grace Makutsi, who earned a record 97% on her test in secretarial school, is happily engaged to the owner of a local furniture store. She and Phuti Radiphuti are looking forward to their approaching marriage. Mma Makutsi starts to get nervous when her nemesis, Violet Sephotso who was much more attractive than talented in school, applies for a position in the bedding department of Mr. Radiphuti's store. After the way Precious and Grace embarrassed Violet in the last book, Mma Makutsi thinks Violet wants to get revenge by stealing the well-off and successful Mr. Radiphuti.

Mma Ramotswe is dealing with her own troubles as well. Her beloved white van, which has been trouble with mechanical problems for some time, seems to have finally reached a point when it is not worth repairing it. The little white van has been a reliable companion for her for years so she is taking the loss to heart. She understands that Mr. J.L.B. Matakoni thinks that she should have a vehicle that runs properly.

As usual, McCall Smith's tale of a detective and her friends in Botswana is a pleasurable read. Since Mma Ramotswe is not familiar with the sport of football, her investigation is quite humorous. Getting to see Mma Makutsi work with Charlie, Mr. J.L.B. Matakoni's less than reliable apprentice, in order to find out how Violet is so successful in capturing sales.

While this volume wasn't strong on the "mystery" elements, but it really gives the reader a chance to spend more time focused on some really fun characters. I really loved this one. I am a little sad since I am now all caught up with the series. That means I have to wait for the next one to come out!

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## Judy says

I'm addicted to this series of gentle books by Alexander McCall Smith that take place in the southern African country of Botswana. The stories are about the conflict between the traditional way of life and the emergence of modern culture that is placing strains on the people of Botswana. And in the telling of that story, throw in a gentle mystery or human problem or two and you have yourself a good read. In this book, Mma Ramotswe is asked to find out why the popular local soccer team is suddenly losing games to teams much weaker than themselves. She is also suffering a grievous loss--her tiny white van has been taken to the junk yard and has been replaced by a modern blue vehicle. (I'm holding out hope that we haven't seen the last of the tiny white van yet.) And Mma Makutsi is afraid that Phuti Radiphuti is going to be stolen from her by her archrival from secretarial school (where we all know that Grace achieved 97%) Violet Sephotso. I have recently become friendly with a young woman from Botswana and these books by Alexander McCall Smith helped to lead us into, what I hope, is a lasting friendship. Keep them coming.

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## **Tina says**

"I am your sister. There was no simpler or more effective way of expressing a whole philosophy of life."

"Human hurt was like lightning; it did not choose its targets, but struck, with rough equality and little regard to position, achievement, or moral desert."

"There is plenty of work for love to do."

"It did not really matter what the relationship was; a home was a home whoever lived in it, it was the same family no matter how attenuated the links of blood and lineage."

"Until you hear the whole story, until you dig deeper, and listen, she thought, you know only a tiny part of the goodness of the human heart."

"When we dismiss or deny the hopes of others, she thought, we forget that they, like us, have only one chance in this life."

"We were tiny creatures, really; tiny and afraid, trying to hold our place on the little platform that was our earth. So while the world about us might seem so solid, so permanent, it was not really. We were all at the mercy of chance, no matter how confident we felt, hostages to our own human frailty. And that applied not only to people, but countries too."

"That is the best thing that anybody can be to anybody else-a friend."

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## **Robin says**

Book 10 of 16 of The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency casts Mma Precious Ramotswe, Botswana's only private eye, in the unaccustomed role of a football (or soccer) detective. A certain Mr. Molofololo (accent on the "o"), owner of the Kalahari Swoopers, insists there must be a traitor on his team, causing it to lose games that it should win. Mma Ramotswe and her prickly associate Mma Makutsi get to work, interviewing the players and exposing jealous rivalries, suspicious debts, possible vision problems, and other motives making every member of the team almost equally likely to be the traitor. But of course, the solution comes out of the mouth of Mma Ramotswe's foster son Puso, who is wild about the game.

Meanwhile, Mma Makutsi is worried about losing her fiancé, Mr. Phuti Radiphuti, to the seductive charms of her arch-rival from the Botswana Secretarial College. Violet Sepotho, already a confirmed husband-stealer, takes a job at Phuti's furniture store and shows a surprising talent for selling beds. While Mma Makutsi writhes in anxiety, the agency gets a visit from another Mma Sepotho - who, surprisingly, is unrelated - asking for help with her own dilemma: She has two husbands, who are unaware of her two-timing. Now the weekday husband wants to invite the weekend husband over for dinner - and she is supposed to serve as hostess while also appearing as the guest's wife.

Solutions to Mma Ramotswe's cases are often anticlimactic and down-to-earth. She is devoted to a manual of

private detection by a certain Clovis Andersen, and usually thinks he is never wrong; but at times, she figures out ways of doing things that she knows Clovis Andersen would not approve. She understands how to get valuable information out of children. She has learned the best way to find out about something is to ask a direct question. And she applies the attitude every day that what her career is about is helping people. This makes her series of adventures an unusually gentle, compassionate saga of low-key mysteries, enlivened by whimsical incidents like the foiling of Violet Sepotho's plan, and held together by minor plot arcs like Mma Ramotswe's touching quest to reunite with her faithful, old, tiny white van. The next book in the series is *The Double Comfort Safari Club*.

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