



# In the Company of Cheerful Ladies

*Alexander McCall Smith*

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## **In the Company of Cheerful Ladies** Alexander McCall Smith

Mma Ramotswe's normally unshakable composure is rattled when a visitor forces her to confront a secret from her past.

In the newest addition to the universally beloved No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency series, the charming and ever-resourceful Precious Ramotswe finds herself overly beset by problems. She is already busier than usual at the detective agency when added to her concerns are a strange intruder in her house on Zebra Drive and the baffling appearance of a pumpkin. And then there is Mma Makutsi, who decides to treat herself to dance lessons, only to be partnered with a man who seems to have two left feet. Nor are things running quite as smoothly as they usually do at Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors. Mma Ramotswe's husband, the estimable Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni, is overburdened with work even before one of his apprentices runs off with a wealthy woman. But what finally rattles Mma Ramotswe's normally unshakable composure is a visitor who forces her to confront a secret from her past. . . .

All this unfolds against the sunlit background of Mma Ramotswe's beloved homeland, Botswana—a land of empty spaces, echoing skies, and an endless supply of soothing bush tea.

## **In the Company of Cheerful Ladies Details**

Date : Published April 19th 2005 by Pantheon (first published 2004)

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Author : Alexander McCall Smith

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# **From Reader Review In the Company of Cheerful Ladies for online ebook**

**Lillian Carl says**

This one has a bit more plot than some of the previous ones. The apprentice Charlie is up to no good, as usual, and when Grace and Precious follow him, they not only discover a problem with Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni's old house, they also, quite by accident, pick up Mr. Polopetsi, a new assistant for both the garage and the agency.

Also, Precious has to confront a difficult part of her own past, while Grace, who starts attending a dancing school, finds her future completely re-written. Of course everything ends positively, which is one reason I enjoy the series so much.

Another reason is Precious' philosophy:

"There were many selfish people about these days, people who seemed not to care if they scraped the cars of others or bumped into people while walking on the street. Mma Ramotswe knew that this was what happened when towns became bigger and people became strangers to one another; she knew, too, that this was a consequence of increasing prosperity, which, curiously enough, just seemed to bring out greed and selfishness."

"If you knew what it was like to be another person, then how could you possibly do something which would cause pain? The problem, though, was that there seemed to be people in whom that imaginative part was just missing. It could be that they were born this way---with something missing from their brains---or it could be that they became like that because they were never taught by their parents to sympathize with others. That was the most likely explanation, thought Mma Ramotswe. A whole generation of people,

not only in Africa, but everywhere else, had not been taught to feel for others because the parents simply had not bothered to teach them this."

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### **Karen says**

These are cozy little reads that are really more about the characters' relationships to each other than about any mysteries taken on by the detective agency. I recently saw a documentary about Alexander McCall Smith. He confesses that he wants to present books about Africa that are not tragedies. He sets the pace slowly (as per the "cozy mystery" genre conventions). He likes to imagine himself as grounded and wise as Mma Ramotswe. He also explains how he travels from Scotland back to Botswana once a year to conduct research for each subsequent book in the series. These books are slow-paced, domestic, charming and educational. I am learning a bit about Botswana, which makes me feel less guilty about reading genre fiction.

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### **Valerie K says**

Not my favorite in this series. Some of the story lines were good, but if you took out all the repetitions within this one book itself, you could probably lose a couple chapters, and if you took out passages that are essentially repeats from other books in the series you could cut this book in half. It just starts to feel like filler to me, I'd rather the words were spent more on story and less on repeated reflections. Plus I felt like both Mma Ramotswe and Mma Makutsi are becoming more inflexible in their judgements of other people but especially each other. Being privy to their unspoken criticisms of each other is making both of them seem kind of mean-spirited at times. It's not balanced with a lot of positive reflections, so I was left feeling like their friendship is slowly deteriorating (probably this feeling has been growing in me over the last few books). Mma Makutsi seems to be heading in a rather materialistic and selfish direction, while Mma Ramotswe seems more and more critical of just about everyone except the few people who fit in with her ideals of sticking to "the old Botswana morality", which I think I've heard just about enough of by this point. I still find it interesting on one level to learn about this culture's old world code of ethics, but the way it's hammered in every book over and over, I'm starting to feel like a restless teenager whose elders keep saying, "You know when I was your age, we respected our elders..." (blah blah blah) I'm taking a break before reading the next book to see if some distance helps.

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### **Jean says**

I found this one to be more entertaining than some of the books in the series. I wouldn't recommend the "No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency" series to just anyone, but I admit I have enjoyed it. The landscape of Botswana is depicted beautifully, lovingly throughout.

I think some folks might NOT appreciate the idyllicism, the simplicity of characters, the repetition. The people and situations are charmingly simple (the style has been called utopian) and it really worked for me but I wonder if some might feel that the characters are just bufoons, and they might take issue with that. Also, I would be naive to pretend to know about cultural authenticity for this book--so I'm not even

addressing that issue. For me, the constant repetition of themes and descriptions is a nod to folklore and the oral tradition of storytelling. And the situations are, well, sweet and lightly humorous. I really enjoyed this one.

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### **Blaine DeSantis says**

Things have gotten better in this, the 6th book of the No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency. Some of my frustrations of book 5 got resolved and there was more mystery and more matters that held our attention in this book. It began early with Mma. Ramotswe having a feeling there was an intruder in her home, and then there was the episode with the pumpkin that mysteriously arrived on her porch. Mma. Makutsi plays a prominent role, once again in the book and we are also introduced to two new characters, Mr. Polopetsi and Mr. Phuti Radiphuti (maybe the best name I have heard in a while). Nothing too serious or exciting happened in the book and yet it is a quite satisfying read, as small matters now begin to consume the Agency. A person from Mma. Ramotswe's past shows up, Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni has tenant issues and Mma. Makutsi takes dancing lessons. Daily life really encroaches on the Agency and no matter how big or small, the No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency is ready to tackle any case - even if we do have to wait until almost the very end to find out how that pumpkin got onto Mma. Ramotswe's verandah. The more you read this series, the more these characters become fleshed out and by the end of the book you are ready for the next book in the series to see how your friends at the No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency are faring in the day to day adventures of life in Botswana.

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### **Anne Hawn Smith says**

Since so many people are writing reviews about these wonderful books and discussing the plot, I think I will talk about Africa and especially the way Mma Ramotswe feels about her home and her people. Reading these books has given me the same feeling I got from the beginning of Out of Africa and Cry, the Beloved Country. There is such a deep love of the land in these characters and I find myself wanting to be there with them. I also find myself remembering how I felt in Mississippi in the days of my childhood. There seemed no better place to be. Life was filled with troubles, but there was always the land and free and easy friendships to help me along. I think that may be what we all are relating to, or at least it is to me.

I also am reminded of a time in our lives where we were not so mobile and people lived in areas where we weren't homogenized. We had to learn to not only get along with some of the more unique and prickly members of our community, but often come to value them. I feel like my life was made much richer by relating to a local alcoholic who got saved at least twice a year, or the man who named all his sons after himself and called them each by nicknames to keep them straight. (I'm not kidding. There were four and they all had the same names.) We visited with people of varying ages and classes and our lives were made richer in a way that watching television in the evening never could. Maybe that is why these books appeal. I'm tired of Hollywood's two dimensional characters and long for what Mma Precious Ramotswe has.

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### **Una Tiers says**

Lovely prose, gentle clever people.

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## **Faith Spinks says**

Another trip to Botswana so couldn't let it pass without another glimpse into the world of Mma Ramotswe. As always it was a delight. I love getting to be on location as I read as the books are so visual already and being there just brings it even more to life. Can't help but adopt the Botswanan accent as I read as well. :)

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## **Friederike Knabe says**

Precious Ramotswe, Botswana's No.1 Lady Detective, is usually concerned with other people's problems and mishaps. She handles these with aplomb, common sense and, sometimes a little pressure... Her usual cheerfulness is rarely put to the test. Yet, when it comes to difficulties in her own life, she is not so well prepared. She has, after all, a position to maintain and this limits her options. Mma Makutsi is her junior in the agency, which makes her unsuitable as a confidante. And Mr J.L.B. Matekoni, she feels, has enough on his plate already to be burdened with more. On one of her regular visits with Mma Potokwani, the pushy matron of the orphan farm to "just sit and talk", she is advised of the reappearance of somebody from her past. Calamity looms for her and her new marriage.

This latest, sixth, instalment of the delightful series, brings us more of life's ups and downs of the small community of Precious' family and friends. Charlie, the young apprentice, seems to be getting into trouble. A minor accident with the tiny white van brings a surprisingly interesting new character into the circle, Mr Polopetsi. He turns out to be quite an asset, quietly working away, and even assisting Mma Ramotswe with her private problems. The white van breaks down, then disappears, leaving Mma Ramotswe in disarray. In the meantime, Mma Makutsi moves into new circles, and takes exploratory steps towards a new life - literally with new shoes.

McCall Smith has a unique style that wraps around the reader like a comforting blanket. We follow the flow and participate in the daily routines and any disruptions of them. McCall Smith's main subject of interest of this as it was in his previous instalments, are the people. The surroundings are beautifully described as a backdrop. With each episode we learn more about the main characters. New aspects are revealed about their personalities that we did not see before. We think we can imagine what might happen next but then, life has its own ways to proceed, often with unexpected results. When, please, is the next instalment?

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## **Nicole Marble says**

Delightful!The more I read McCall Smith, the more I look forward to reading more.

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## **Carol says**

Whenever I am stressed, have too many deadlines, or simply have been reading too much heavy, sad stuff, I look for another in the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency series. It is just relaxing, pleasant reading to imagine myself sitting under an acacia tree in the hot Botswana sun drinking bush tea... Although a totally different

climate and history, Botswana in a way reminds me of rural Costa Rica 20 years ago. The slow pace of life, everyone knows each other, and honesty and reputation and ethics are important.

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### Anne Sue says

On page 110 and 111 I was very much able to relate to the issue Mma Ramotswe and Mma Potekwane discussed, I wrote the quotes from those pages down, for your entertainment:)

"Mma Ramotswe sighed. "We are all tempted, Mma. We are all tempted when it comes to cake." "That is true," said Mma Potekwane. "There are many temptations in this life, but cake is probably one of the biggest of them.""

""Temptation is very difficult," said Mma Ramotswe quietly. "I do not always resist it. I am not a strong woman in that respect." "I am glad you said that," said Mma Potokwane. "I am not strong either. For example, right at the moment, I am thinking of cake." "And so am I," confessed Mma Ramotswe. Mma Potekwane stood up and shouted to the girl outside. "Two more pieces of cake, please. Two big slices.""

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### PurplyCookie says

In this sixth entry in McCall Smith's consistently delightful series, Botswana detective Precious Ramotswe, the traditionally built—and newly married—owner of the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency, is saddled with a surfeit of challenging cases and personal crises.

*"One might have all the things which the modern world offered, but what was the use of these if they destroyed all that which gave you strength and courage and pride in yourself and in your country?"*

There has been an intruder in her home (he managed to escape, but left a telltale pair of trousers in his wake). And the levelheaded sleuth is flustered by an encounter with a man from her past. She is totally devastated when her ex-husband Note shows up demanding money, and she has to make the hardest decisions of her life while Mr. J. L. B. Matekoni watches and waits.

At the same time, her assistant, Mma Makutsi, is preoccupied with finding a husband and has joined a dancing class, and it appears that Charlie, the apprentice at the auto shop, has run off with an older woman. Large cups of bush tea remain the main source of relief for thirst and for solving mysteries. Among the new characters is Mr. Polopetsi, hired to work at Tlokweng Road after Mma Ramotswe knocks him off his bicycle with her tiny white van.

Throughout the series, plots and subplots serve primarily as vehicles for character development and the exploration of cultural values. I found **"In the Company of Cheerful Ladies"** to be one of the better ones in the series. Smith has the amazing gift of taking the reader to an exotic land and yet his stories are very familiar. His prose is extremely clear and simple and yet the content is thought provoking and deep. With clever subplots, Smith is able to bridge Western and African cultures.

*"There had been ignorance, but now more and more people were learning to write, and were graduating from universities. Women had been held in such servitude, and now they could vote and express themselves*

*and claim lives for themselves, even if there are still many men who did not want such things to be. These were the good things that happened and one had to remember them."*

#### Book Details:

Title In the Company of Cheerful Ladies (No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency, Book 6)

Author Alexander McCall Smith

Reviewed By Purplycookie

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#### **Shirley Daniels says**

I love the characters of Mma Precious Ramatswe, Mma Grace Makutsi and Mr J.L.B. Matekoni and have gained appreciation for Botswana and the respectful attitudes of its traditional way of life. The books in this series have brightened my evenings.

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#### **Isis says**

I don't know whether the books are getting better as the series continues, or if I have simply slid into the comfort zone they create for me, with all their repetition and rambling and familiarity, but it seems to me that they are becoming more thematically focused and cohesive. This book's intertwining plots center on appearance and reality, on expectations and prejudgment and how they may obscure the truth: from the book's beginning, where Mma Ramotswe, trying to stop a crime, is taken for a criminal, to the end, where people prove their worth despite their unprepossessing appearances - and vice versa.

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#### **Laura says**

\*\*\*Second read\*\*\*

This one was even better the second time through. It's the characters and the author's appreciation for Botswana and the natural world that make this series. I just love these people and would enjoy spending time with them in real life. They make me laugh, warm my heart, and sometimes surprise me. I love that they grow and develop throughout the series, and bring attachments into their lives (without giving anything away) that broaden the series and enhance the reader's enjoyment further.

But I think what I appreciate most about this series is the civility with which the main characters interact with others, even people who have done them grievous harm. There is something to be said for that, and Mma Ramotswe has quite a few things to teach the world. I wish everyone would read this series; I love it that much. And thoroughly enjoying rereading it.

If you are an audiobook listener, this series really cannot be beat. Lisette Lecat narrates each and every book, and she does so magnificently. There are many characters of both sexes, and she changes voices for each person, and does so convincingly and movingly. She knows exactly when to pause, and when to change her tone, and I feel I am watching the book on a movie screen as I listen. She is priceless and really makes these



books even better with her delightful and poignant narration.

I can't praise Alexander McCall Smith or Lisette Lecat highly enough. Please give this series a try.

\*\*\*First read\*\*\*I just love this author. His books are charming, and make you think and wonder about human nature. Mma Ramotswe is a wonderful woman, and I love JLB Matekoni's new assistant too. And Mma Makutsi's new friend. This series just keeps getting better.

I have to add that the audio version of this series is especially enjoyable.

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## **Gláucia Renata says**

Sexto volume da série Agência Número 1 de Mulheres Detetives, continua deliciosa! Como sempre, nada de acontecimentos grandiosos, tudo é muito simples e corriqueiro aqui.

Mma Ramotswe se depara com o misterioso aparecimento de uma abóbora além de um par de calças masculinas em sua casa, Mr J.L.B. Matekoni tem um problema com Charlie, o aprendiz mais velho por conta de uma rica mulher numa Mercedes-Benz, ganha um novo ajudante, Mma Makutsi resolve aprender a dançar e Note reaparece.

De ler com um eterno sorriso nos lábios... Quero mais.

### Histórico de leitura

26/04/2016

66% (168 de 256)

"Os médicos sempre nos dizem coisas que devemos fazer que eles mesmos não conseguem. Isso não significa que seus conselhos sejam maus."

11% (29 de 256)

"Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni gostava de chá, é claro, mas ele raramente fazia chá para ele mesmo. Ela não tinha pensado nisso antes, mas agora parecia muito interessante que alguém acreditasse que o chá simplesmente aparecia pronto. Ele não era um homem preguiçoso mas era comum perceber que a maior parte dos homens imaginava que coisas como chá e comida simplesmente apareciam se eles esperassem tempo suficiente."

4% (11 de 256)

"Mma Ramotswe estava sentada sozinha em seu café favorito, no shopping central de Gaborone no final da estrada Tlokweng."

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## **Jrobertus says**

this is a most enjoyable little novel about a large african lady who uses her inheritance to set up a detective agency. she solves small, human, mysteries in a clever way. warm, funny and thoroughly enjoyable stuff. the 6th in the series. humane, whimsical, and humorous as always. in this one, mme Ramwatsi has trouble with her 'ex', Note, and mma Maccutse finally finds a good man.

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## **Laurel says**

There is something so comforting about this series. Even though life in Botswana is most likely very different than life in Canada, there is something about the tone or writing style that reminds me of life at my grandparent's house. I love the traditional values, the respect for people/property/manners. And most of all, I love that it is important to slow down and really be in the moment with those important to you. I know that the future installments become a little formulaic. However, every so often I am struck by how much I miss my grandparents, and reading one of these books takes the edge off. There is a little magic to these books.

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## **Marie says**

The entire #1 Ladies Detective Agency series is the most unique set of books I have ever read. I really believe McCall deserves all of the hype he gets for this series, as it has universal appeal.

Mma Ramoswe ponders the questions in life that so many of us do, (or would, if we would just slow down a bit!) But she is so human, too, and some of my favorite parts of this recent addition are the instances in which she muses about Mma Makutsi's "97 percent", but stops just shy of admitting that she idolizes her father and Seretse. Oooh- she is sooo cute. I wish I could meet her. I have the feeling I could be a better person just to know her!

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