



The Kalahari Typing School for Men

Alexander McCall Smith

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Life is never without its problems. Will Precious Ramotswe's delightfully cunning and profoundly moral methods save the day? Find out in this, the fourth volume in the No.1 Ladies Detective Agency series featuring Botswana's first and only lady detective.

Now that The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency (the only detective agency for ladies and others in Botswana) is established, its founder, Precious Ramotswe, can look upon her life with pride: she's reached her late thirties ("the finest age to be"), has a house, two children, a good fiancé -- Mr. J. L. B. Matekoni -- and many satisfied customers. But life is never without its problems. It turns out that her adopted son is responsible for the dead hoopoe bird in the garden; her assistant, Mma Makutsi, wants a husband and needs help with her idea to open the Kalahari Typing School for Men; yet Mma Ramotswe's sexist rival has no trouble opening his Satisfaction Guaranteed Detective Agency across town. Will Precious Ramotswe's delightfully cunning and profoundly moral methods save the day? Follow the continuing story of Botswana's first lady detective in the irresistible The Kalahari Typing School for Men.

The Kalahari Typing School for Men Details

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Author : Alexander McCall Smith

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From Reader Review The Kalahari Typing School for Men for online ebook

Srividya says

Africa is a continent that is somehow really close to my heart. This is largely because I have had several friends from the continent, coming from Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria to name a few. One of my closest friends after marriage is from Liberia. Added to this fact, is that my husband makes regular visits to the continent during the course of his work and comes home with some splendid tales about living in that continent. Botswana was a mystery for me, despite the fact that I have a cousin living there and who has lived there since a very long time.

With this series, however, I was introduced to this wonderful country and its people and culture. For that alone this, would deserve high praise, but when you add to it a lovely story that is part cozy mystery and part cultural treatise; it definitely becomes a personal favourite, one that stays with me even after I finish reading it. Long are the echoes of Mma Ramotswe and her nuggets of wisdom regarding people in general and Botswanan culture in particular.

This is the fourth book in this series and, like the other three, it opens with Mma Ramotswe talking about certain issues that bother her. In this case, she is firstly worried about Mma Makutsi, who is losing her self confidence as she is still unmarried. Additionally, her adopted son is also causing problems, especially behavioural, which she cannot understand and therefore solve. Mma Ramotswe has no experience in raising children, so it is natural that she feels uncertain about raising her adoptive kids. Also there is a new detective agency that has opened in her town, which means that she needs to deal with competition. Mma Makutsi, on the other hand, is also worried about her finances and chances of a secure earning, which leads her to think of different options to earn money; one such idea is the Kalahari Typing School for Men.

Amidst these two issues, Mma Ramotswe receives two potential cases, both quite different from the other and yet both extremely of a personal nature. While these issues might not seem like much and pretty mundane at that, what makes the book beautiful is the way in which the author has blended African and especially Botswanan culture and small niceties in this book. While reading this book, or for that matter any book in this series, I have a slight smile on my face; one that depicts my happiness at reading such a beautiful prose.

Africa and its culture comes to life under the gentle touch of the author and this is extremely difficult, especially when you are writing a cozy mystery. Mma Ramotswe's talent at getting the best out of people, the African need to know about everyone in their home town and their allusions to the older and more sedate Botswana, all remind me of how things work in India. Indian villages are quite similar in their approach and ability to interact with this African country. The need to exhibit respect for elders, the proper way of interaction, the casual and gentle nudging out of local gossip, all make me feel as if I were reading about an Indian village and this makes the book extra special to me.

In short, this was an enjoyable read and I am already looking forward to reading the next in the series. If you haven't read this one, I suggest that you begin with book 1. Don't expect great mystery solving abilities, instead look at it as a beautiful river that flows gently and waters the areas that it passes; a river that enriches your knowledge about Botswana and African culture in general.

Blaine DeSantis says

Another solid effort in the No. 1 Ladies Detective Series, as these books continue to delve into its characters and manages to use this as a way to have them involved in the new cases. While the books are very delightful and easy to read, I feel that the author needs to get these ladies involved in much more serious and complicated cases. So far, most of the cases are cute and involve a lot of moral detecting, but the time has come for Mma. Ramotswe and Mma. Makutsi to get into some meatier cases, especially since Book 4 introduced a new Detective Agency to the town. We also saw the first sparks of love for Mma. Makutsi even though it was short-lived, as she also branches out by opening the Mens Typing School. Mma. Makutsi is a great character and almost a more enjoyable one then the lead character Mms Ramotswe. You do not want to miss the one part where they all go to church to support their one apprentice - it is hilarious and is the funniest thing that has been written to date in this series. It is obvious that the author loved Botswana and has transferred that love onto his main character Mma. Ramotswe. And as in all the prior books, by the end all the cases and moral dilemmas are resolved by the end of the book and we are left with only one question? When will Mma. Ramotswe and Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni going to be married??? That is the biggest unsolved mystery that has yet to be finalized!

abby says

Reading a book in the No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency series is like catching up with old friends. Mma Ramotswe is still proud to be a traditionally-built woman living in the greatest country in Africa, if not the world. Her assistant, Mma Makutsi, reminds anyone who will listen that she scored a 97 at her typing school and laments that prettier girls get the best jobs. Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni finally stands up to the mistress of the orphan home-- by agreeing to fix more things for free. Then there are the mysteries, which are almost besides the point, but of course Mma Ramotswe continues to use savvy and good judgment, showing mercy whenever applicable. The rest of the series has shown snippets of sexism in the past, with Ramotswe often "observing" that men are overgrown boys incapable of, well, everything, frankly, but McCall Smith ratchets it up a notch in this installment. Even so, I found this book an improvement over the last in the series. These books continue to be gentle, friendly, white noise for me, and I'll keep reading.

Rhonda says

Just as with all the other books in the Ladies No. 1 Detective Agency series, this one evokes a clear sense of place and characters. Simply put, it makes me want to be in Botswana right now. One of the things I like best about Alexander McCall Smith's writing is the way he develops his characters through their lives and actions and not much in the way of a narrator's analysis. The author seems to feel a great deal of affection for his characters even when they make unwise choices. These books are fresh, unpredictable, and plain ol' addictive. I actually read this one but have listened to the previous ones in the series on audio CD. I'd recommend listening to at least one title in this series to hear the cadence of the names and places.

James says

A delightfully gentle series of books by Alexander McCall Smith - set in and around Botswana's capital city of Gaborone and stories of the 'No.1 Ladies Detective Agency'.

McCall Smith has created a lovely world of mainly (very) amateurish sleuthing - which whilst ostensibly the theme which is central to these books, is ultimately almost incidental. The main draw here is the cast of well drawn, well written, very memorable and on the whole very endearing (if occasionally frustrating) characters - Precious Ramotswe, Grace Makutsi, J.L.B. Matekoni et al and the interplay of their lives - the detective work and cases here become increasingly an incidental backdrop.

The 'No.1 Ladies Detective Agency' stories and characters certainly have an air of authenticity and believability (although obviously contrived and significantly exaggerated for comic effect) and interestingly McCall Smith did spend some time living and working in Botswana.

The first few books in the series are undoubtedly the strongest, funniest, most entertaining and compelling. Whilst later installments are all good - they do feel like somewhat of retread of ideas that McCall has spun out perhaps beyond their natural course.

Whilst serious themes are alluded to - feminism, AIDS and domestic violence; there is little here that is particularly thought provoking or challenging - but then that's not the point here. For anyone wanting a series of light, likeable, entertaining, funny, absorbing, well written and compelling amateur detective books - with a difference, then the 'No.1 Ladies Detective Agency' books are a must.

Good stories, simple truths - people doing the right thing. Ultimately these stories are all about kindness, forgiveness, restitution and resolution. Which in itself is surely a good enough reason to read at least some of this lovely series of books?

Stephanie says

My colleague and I have recently groused together that a certain novelist who writes a certain set of trashy novels to which we are both addicted, is such a poor writer that even though the novels are set in Louisiana, when we read the dialogue what we hear in our minds' ears are the voices of people just like us who live in the Pacific Northwest. And upon reading these admittedly addicting trashy novels, I have no reason to picture the heat and damp and mosquitos with which I *know* Louisiana must be afflicted, because the author does nothing to help me imagine the setting.

Nothing can be further from the writing of Alexander McCall Smith, author of the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency series, of which [The Kalahari Typing School for Men](#) is the first book I've read. When I read the words on Mr. Smith's pages, I hear the measured lilt of a Botswana accent, and his characters have such rich inner lives that I am able to nod with satisfaction that each is behaving according to his own character. Mr. Smith's writing is beautiful and wonderfully evocative; I can imagine the garage, the house, the bush, the little white van, the cattle with their beautiful eyes, and the field with its endless sky. The pace of his story was slow, as measured and lilting as a Botswana voice must surely be, and the story's arc was satisfying. I will read more books in this series.

Liz says

Still loving the series!

Hilary says

[romance with a man whom she didn't know was married but was being investigated by Mma Ramotswe on suspicion of cheating, under instruction from his wife. (awkward situation) Luckily Mma Makutsi is saved from this knowledge by her friends thoughtfulness and the cheating husband leaves

Sarah says

Yay for this series! I'm glad there are so many. It actually inspired me to read more about Botswana. Here is a nugget from this book:

"People's lives were delicate; you cannot interfere with them without running the risk of changing them profoundly. A chance remark, a careless involvement, may make the difference between a life of happiness and one of sorrow."

pg 164

Debbie Young says

This series is my current comfort-read. A lovely world to escape into for late-night reading, beautifully written, sensitively told. Really life-enhancing. Wonderful.

Laura says

****Second read****

4.25 stars. This is a wonderful series I thoroughly enjoy reading. AMS's humor is all over these books, and I'm always chuckling as I'm reading or listening. These characters are real, and for the most part, they are kind people. The community sticks together and helps each other. It's just what you do, and not even thought of as being especially anything other than human to do for others.

This is a series to read when you want to have faith in humankind, when you want to smile, when you want to read about a simpler place and time. Mma Ramotswe is just priceless; we all need to have a Mma Ramotswe or two in our lives.

I want to once again thank Mr. Alexander McCall Smith for sharing his wisdom, sense of humor, kindness

and humanity, as well as his love for Botswana with the world. The world is a better place because of this man and his novels. Thank you, sir.

****First read review****

4.5 stars. I love this series so much. In my opinion, it's the best series currently being written. Nothing earthshaking going on, but it's about people who try to do the best they can all the time to help one another. And it can be pretty funny too. And not at all crude or off-color, but not sickening sweet either.

I just love it! I can see why it's internationally loved.

Jessica says

I'm not entirely sure, but I think Alexander McCall Smith made a sort of cameo in this book! Mma Ramotswe is looking at some photographs with a friend, and she sees a man in one of them, smiling, and asks who it is. Her friend says he is a nice man who stays with them sometimes, and writes books. "You would like him." "I'm sure I would." I giggled: I'm sure this is the author referencing himself!

But anyway: another delightful novel about Mma Ramotswe, her detective agency, and her friends. What I love about these books is that it isn't just some long murder mystery, it's a series of smaller mysteries, human mysteries: can you find this person for me, do you know where my husband is going at night? It's more real and more human. There is also the day-to-day drama of their lives: Mma Ramotswe, her fiance, the foster children, their friends. In this particular book, Mma Makutsi starts a typing school for men, and falls for one of her students, while Mma Ramotswe is busy on a most delicate case indeed. These books have a slow and dreamy quality, but they are quality, and the writing is beautiful and joyous to read.

Ivz Andonova says

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Robin says

I just can't seem to get enough of this series.

I find it soothing, but not boring. I love the setting and learning more about Botswana. But mostly I love the lifestyle of the main character. I love her simplicity. I love that they live in a non-materialistic world so that the focus is truly on important things. I love the kindness she shows to everyone. I love the directness and honesty of almost all the characters. I love the way they greet each other as family and welcome new people into their lives. I love their acceptance of each other and their forgiveness. I love the way she follows her intuition and logic together. I love the way she stays true to the old ways, the respectful ways.

They are just a nice, comfortable read. And the ability of the author to maintain quality book after book is impressive. I love spending time with his characters.

Will Byrnes says

Alexander McCall Smith - image from famousauthors.org

Guilt is the subject here. The theme is threaded throughout. The primary client of the book is a mister Molefelo, a hotelier and ostrich farmer. He had committed a crime as a youth and sought to atone for his sins. Precious helps him of course. Mma Makutsi acquires a beau, Mister Seleliping. She also attempts to begin a new business, and does, the typing school of the title. The detective agency gains competition in the form of a male-run enterprise run by a very pompous individual.

Jill Scott as Precious Ramotswe - Image from BBC

This is the usual comfortable tale told in the usual manner. Smith maintains his high standard. The cast of characters has come to seem familial. We wonder at Mister Maketoni's recovery from depression. What was it all about? Will Makatsi every have a true boyfriend? Will she become rich beyond all her dreams? Will Precious ever get married to Maketoni?

Anika Noni Rose as Grace Makutsi - image from HBO

If 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 time. And if you can, I would definitely check out the HBO series. It is a true shame that the series was killed after only six episodes. Those shows are precious indeed..

Linda says

These books drive me crazy, but instead of talking about what I don't like about them, I want to say what I do like. I keep reading them for some reason, so I think it is about time I figure out why.

The first reason is that the author, clearly, has an affection for Botswana. He describes cattle in a way that makes me want to love cows. He describes a desert in way that makes me want to vacation there.

The second is that I can appreciate a book that isn't in a hurry, I read a lot of action/adventure books, so I like the way this book takes its time and concentrates on human interaction, but still respects the fact that there is a plot to developed.

There are many books in this series, so I'll discuss what I don't like, next time.

Lauren says

The story of Kalahari Typing School for Men was much like its immediate predecessor, Morality for Beautiful Girls. The novel focuses a great amount on the development of some characters, and leaves others "out to dry", and ultimately strays away from the things that made books 1 and 2 of the series so good: the cases, the interactions, and the values of the Botswana people. That is not to say that this book does not have any detective cases, but I find the novels have shifted from their original focus. However, one thing that I did like about this book is the increased role and development of Mma Makutsi. She is a great characters, and until book 3, Mma Makutsi existed in the shadows. I look forward to seeing her develop more in the next books.

Writerlibrarian says

Fourth installment in this amazing series. You don't read Mma Ramotswe novels for the action or even for

the mysteries. You read them for the gentle rhythm of the narration, the wise philosophy of the characters. In this we rejoin Mma Ramotswe as she waits for her fiancée to set a date for their wedding after his illness. Mr Matekoni is slowly coming out of depression and finds his motor repair shop in the good hands of Mma Makutsi who shares her time between the detective agency and the auto repair shop. The joy of these novels is the intimate view of how the characters live, their values, how they set goals for themselves and go after them. Mma Makutsi finds a way to get ahead and make a life for herself beyond the limits of her current situation : single, with a sick brother to take care of and very low income. Mma Ramotswe faces competition with the opening of a new detective agency run by a male detective with international experience. Everything ends well, despite some minor moral growing pains. I like the philosophy, the values McCall Smith projects thru his characters in this simple, yet very nourishing for the soul, series.

Moshe Mikanovsky says

Still charming though not enough investigating, which was missing for me.

Laura says

More slow charm and gentle truth seeking from our friends at the #1 Ladies Detective Agency, who now have a competitor in the form of the Satisfaction Guaranteed Detective Agency (“Don’t take any chances! Entrust your inquiries to a MAN!”). A ten year old could see the competition isn’t going to be that stiff, but the lack of subtlety is one of the most delightful qualities of these books, partly because it reminds me that most people really aren’t that adept at hiding unpleasant traits, and partly because it gives Mma Ramotswe material for her commentaries on men.

This one has a couple of bittersweet storylines that pulled at my sympathies — the trusty assistant Mma Makutsi starts her own business and becomes involved in a bit of an intrigue, and Mma Ramotswe has a client who needs help rectifying a past sin. Mma Ramotswe doesn’t have murders to solve, but she does have to deal with other crimes and failings that must be put right, and this she does with compassion and principles.
