



# Tears of the Giraffe

*Alexander McCall Smith*

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## **Tears of the Giraffe** Alexander McCall Smith

"This is a superior piece of detective fiction, written in simple, direct but effective prose. Perhaps most importantly, this novel offers a refreshingly positive picture of an African nation - and probably deserves a wide audience in the West on those grounds alone."

In 1999 The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency received two Booker Judges' Special Recommendations and was voted one of the 'International Books of the Year and the Millennium' by the Times Literary Supplement.

Tears of the Giraffe takes us further into the life of the engaging and sassy Precious Ramotswe, the owner and detective of Botswana's only Ladies' detective agency. Among her cases are wayward wives, unscrupulous maids and a challenge to resolve a mother's pain for her son, who is long lost on the African plains. Mma Ramotswe's own impending marriage to that most gentlemanly of men, Mr. J. L. B. Matekoni, the promotion of her secretary to the dizzy heights of Assistant Detective and new additions to the Matekoni family, all brew up the most humorous and charmingly entertaining of tales.

## **Tears of the Giraffe Details**

Date : Published August 7th 2003 by Abacus (first published 2000)

ISBN : 9780349116655

Author : Alexander McCall Smith

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Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Cultural, Africa, Crime

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## **From Reader Review Tears of the Giraffe for online ebook**

### **Graham says**

I absolutely adored the first in Smith's Botswanan stories, so after a while I set about tackling the sequel. I wasn't disappointed.

TEARS OF THE GIRAFFE is the better book purely because Smith doesn't have to carefully set up the situation and characters; we already know all about them, so he can just get on with it.

The best thing about this novel is all of the different ingredients thrown into the mix. We have another missing child, with a much more complex story this time around; we have a heart-breaking story of a couple of orphans, and we have further character development on the part of Precious' love interest, Mr Matekoni, as well as her secretary.

As a whole the book seems a little deeper, a little more vivid, a little more in touch with the spirit of Africa, and it's a delightful read.

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### **Kim Kaso says**

I read this series and the Philosophy series when the world is unbearable and my emotions are out of kilter, they always cheer me up and help me through. If books are prescriptions, these would be mood lifters. Times when my husband lost his job, or did not get the job we thought looked liked a sure thing, times when we nearly lost our home and I had a heart attack, these books have helped us through. Times are better now, but it is a comfort to know Precious and Grace and their friends & relations are there, as well as Ms. Dalhousie and company.

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### **Tiara says**

2nd book in the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency series. I was trudging my way through Twilight (still only half done with that book after two weeks--a shame) when I decided to shift my focus to this instead. I breezed through this book. The story picks up right where the last one left off and is just as personable and easy to read. Along with a fiance, Precious has picked up an adopted son and daughter. Some may think she went along with that too readily, but it seemed in character for her to me. Firstly, she'd lost her own child and is unable to have anymore, and it's obvious that she wants children. Secondly, from the way she talks about how traditional and familial that the people of Africa are (or used to be as she thinks this younger generation is going down), would it have been in character for her to cause a stink because of the children? I love how much pride the characters have in their country and how life is just a different experience for them.

I didn't enjoy this one as much as I did the first for a couple of reasons. I thought the angle with the maid fizzled before it even got started. There's a bit too much of Mma Ramotswa KNOWING things without any explanation why she might know these things aside from intuition, which can be very strong but not plausible in every hunch. Parts of the book were rambly, and I think this was to give the book a more personable tone. However, it really just makes you want to skip right over it and get to the point at times.

Another great book in the series will continue with it.

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### **Janice (Janicu) says**

This book was charming. The main characters, Mma Ramotswe, owner of the No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency and her fiance Mr J. L. B. Matekoni, are a little old fashioned in their idea of politeness and respectability, but refreshingly so. The mysteries that Mma Ramotswe solves are pretty straightforward to the reader; there are no twists in the solving of the crimes, but this is what is so charming about the book. Life in Mma Ramotswe's world is straightforward and full of moral fiber. Her story of what happens in the day to day in Botswana is so different from life in the west, but has its strengths and I can see how much Mma Ramostwe loves her country. I would recommend this book just for the insights it gives about a different culture and way of living.

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### **Chelsea Stephenson says**

I love this series....for you who want to know the order of the books...

1. The no. 1 ladies detective agency
  2. Tears of the Giraffe
  3. Morality for Beautiful Girls
  4. The kalahari typing school for men
  5. Full Cupboard of life
  6. In the co. of cheerful ladies
  7. Blue shoes and happiness
  8. Miracle of speedy motors
  9. The good husband of zebra drive
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### **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 Ramostwe, 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?

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### **Nicola says**

I liked this one *so* much more than I liked The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency. Probably because there was a lot less character introduction and much more actual plot and events. Precious is so very likeable and I think she's highly amusing with some of her thoughts on women, men and the world in general. I love the setting and think it's very unusual and captivating. I really enjoy all the little stories that run through these books and the pearls of wisdom that everyone seems to have on offer. These books are really easy to read and a pleasure to lose yourself in and I'm definitely looking forward to the rest of the (very long) series.

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### **Melissa McShane says**

The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency books are my favorite comfort reads: peaceful, unhurried stories about a country the author loves very much. I think this one is much more solid than the first, probably because there are two main plots interwoven with Precious Ramotswe's other investigations. In the first, she's called on to find out the truth about a young man's disappearance and probable death ten years previously, and in the second, her fiancé Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni (who must surely be one of the sweetest and most decent men in modern fiction) adopts two orphans without consulting Mma Ramotswe first. The second plot draws me in because the expansion of their family before they technically even have a family charms me, and I love the girl, who is fascinated by automotive repair. These are perfect reads for a quiet afternoon.

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### **aPriL does feral sometimes says**

I think a lot of the reviews appear to ignore this is a series written as a tea cozy mystery genre type. Genres follow commonly accepted rules of plotting and characterization depending on the type of genre. Every once in awhile critics get excited over a "genre bending" book because a book didn't follow the rules. This series is NOT genre bending. What it is is an extremely well written, warm, amusing, tea cozy that lightly touches on many aspects of African life, VERY lightly. A light touch is at the heart of being a tea cozy mystery and this series does not break any of the conventions of genre writing rules. What sets it apart is the location. The characters are REALLY charming and that is all about the talent of the author. The only quibble I have is the underlying moral tone is a bit louder than it should be even if it's appropriate.

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## Hilary says

[ Mr J.L.B. Matekoni will turn out to be as good as he seems (it's alleged in the last book that he is the sort of man who would help out with chores around the house) my fears were allayed when he adopts some children after hearing their harrowing story. His kindness to them reveal

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## Laura says

This is a wonderful series to read and to reread. This may be my favorite of them all, or at least in the top three.

It's the feeling I get when I read or listen to these books that I love to return to: a feeling of satisfaction, as though all is right with the world (even when all is not right in the present moment). In this series, though, good triumphs over evil, and you pretty much know that going in.

And then, at the end, it's the way I feel at the end of a beautiful symphony. Everything comes back to tone. And that's just the way I feel every time I close one of these books. This series has become a place I turn to when I want to feel like everything is right with the world again. It's reliably wonderful.

A joy to reread this series, and I'll be picking up the third one this week. Six stars, once again, for the audio performance by Lisette Lecat, and for all of the audiobooks in this series. You can't go wrong with these books for comfort reads.

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## Dusty says

I don't seek out Alexander McCall Smith's *No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* books, and yet when I run across them in a clearance rack I can't help but pick them up. *Tears Of The Giraffe* is the second in the series, and it is just as charming, just as gently comic, as the first installment.

My only problem with the book -- and it's little more than a nagging feeling in the back of my head -- is that the author's depiction of his protagonist, the exceedingly down-to-earth, compassionate and somewhat bumbling detective Mma Precious Ramotswe, borders on caricature and smells just a bit of cultural superiority ("Hey, readers, let's laugh at this overweight African lady who spends her days drinking bush tea and solving trifling mysteries."). I forgive McCall Smith for this, however, as it's clearly not his intent: His love for the country of Botswana, perhaps for the entire African continent, is genuine and infectious -- I can see why the country's leaders see these books (and the HBO series they inspired) as good advertisements to potential tourists.

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## Leila says

I have never really have any interest in reading the books by this author, but recently a member friend

suggested I would probably like them so I decided to give the first one a try. Actually I chose the second in the series by mistake. In the end it didn't really make any difference.

The book is fairly short and an easy read. The cover is colourful and striking. The style of writing is quite unique. It is simple and straightforward with a gentle feel, almost old fashioned in a way and somehow it reflects the atmosphere of Africa. The book is set in Botswana. I did find the names of the characters initially confusing and had to keep checking as to who was who. The main character is a lady detective and is an intriguing personality. The pace is slow in an unhurried fashion and the crime seems to take a back step in that the book is much more about the characters. Madam Precious Ramotswe is a quiet personality on the surface. She is warm and kind. Her intuitive nature is a great aid in that it helps her solve her cases with little fuss and she misses nothing. The man she is engaged too...Mr J. L B Matekoni is also a kindly and gentle personality. I wasn't blown away by the book but it was often touching. There is an absence of the violence often found in the thrillers/crime/ mystery genre. I liked the main characters and it did hold my interest throughout. I will be reading Book One.

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### **Lillian Carl says**

I realize this is only the second book in the series, but for whatever reason I read the first one some years ago and then skipped ahead to five and then to seven or eight or so, and am now making an effort to catch up.

But not too fast! The thing about a series you really like is not, IMHO, racing through them all but letting them sit there like money in the bank, waiting for you to savor.

This volume is the one where Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni finds himself adopting two children---without first checking with Precious, his fiancée. Being the lovely lady she is, she of course goes along and moves the children into her own home.

She also promotes Grace Makutsi, her secretary, to assistant detective. Grace solves a mystery, but is then caught in a moral dilemma about what to do with her findings. Meanwhile, Precious is tracking down what happened to a young American man who disappeared there in Botswana many years ago.

The crimes in these series are usually minor ones---instead, they're gentle, optimistic stories of people and their foibles. I find them a great antidote to the usual edgy and in-your-face mystery thriller.

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### **Lisa Vegan says**

Thanks to Goodreads friend Laura being persistent about getting me to try this series again, I FINALLY read this book. I'd read the first book in the series many years ago and liked it, but didn't like it enough to read on. I think I'd even tried this one and put it down. I'd really struggled with this author's writing style.

I was encouraged to read the audio edition with Lisette Lacat as narrator, and I'm so glad. I'm also glad that I decided to keep a copy of the paperback edition because it turns out I read this best by simultaneously listening to the audio book while reading the paper edition. A particular pleasure since, as is not always the case with audio books, the text was read almost precisely word for word. Only one word was wrong and

contractions were used in the audio and not the paper book, but otherwise they were identical. So I read the Audible edition along with this edition: <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/7...>

How very weird at times though. One audiobook part ended when there were just five pages left to a chapter in the paperback. It took me a while but I learned that it was better for me to measure my reading progress using the paperback chapters and to simply stop the audio play when I was at a good point in the paperback.

I could get spoiled with the pairing of paper/audio editions. Reading this way would definitely help me read when I have difficulty concentrating, especially when due to neighbors' noise, but also for when there are other reasons.

For this book the audio helped me tremendously with pronunciations and dialect! And I could see the humor via the audio that I missed when I tried to read the paper book by itself. Also, the paper book helped me concentrate on the audio, though I did have to rewind at times, rarely though. Reading the audio and the paper editions at the same time was a real pleasure and like magic for me. And this narrator couldn't be better. She is perfect. I plan to all this series' books but I will definitely read the audiobooks, preferably with the paper editions too.

I can't afford to buy books but I'll be looking for a CD player. I can borrow CDs and paper books from the library. I think there might be some audio files too but not many, and right now I have no devices that would work with them.

I ended up liking many things about this story.

I thoroughly enjoyed the humor. It's subtle but very amusing and most of it was based on observations of human behavior. Brilliantly done!

I loved so many of the characters and the relationships. They were a delight.

I appreciated how the various issues and sub-plots were resolved. Very satisfying!

I was so engrossed in what was going on that at some point I'd forgotten to be curious about the book's title. The reader doesn't learn the meaning of the title until the last two pages of the novel. I liked it!

I recently saw the 2016 movie A United Kingdom, twice!, because I loved it so much, and it was fortuitous to then start reading this book. They're a wonderful pairing.

ETA: The "mysteries" in these books seem to be the side stories. The main stories in the books are simple stories about interesting people who live in Botswana. The mysteries are not the main attraction for me.

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## **Visha says**

I felt that this book suffered from sequel-syndrome, although not as bad as it could have. The first book was far more character-driven, while this one has already established the characters and continues on without skipping any time between books (it practically picks up the day after the first book left off), thus all the weight is put upon plot. And since this book is a mystery novel involving several cases to be solved by Mma Ramotswa, well...



I felt that Mma Ramotswe, as a character, is put on the back-burner for this book, and more attention is paid to other character who may or may not warrant it. There's more about JLB Matekoni, Precious' fiance, and two orphans who join the family - warranted; but there's a lot of backstory for Matekoni's maid, whose plan to frame Ramotswe is built up heavily and then deflated before it really jumps.

The cases were not as interesting to me in this book - the formula has already been established and there wasn't anything special that was done - Ramotswe, level-headed and fair, uses her intuition and detective-book learning to smooth out misunderstandings/mysteries. There were a few times that I wanted to see her get fired up about something - really bring home the thunder on someone, but although she had plenty of opportunities, she doesn't rise to take anyone's bait. The main mystery in this book was the case of a missing American man/boy whose mother has returned to Africa to try and get closure. Well, the boy wasn't murdered, so no one is really to blame, and the South African tart that is the mother of his son (although she was also screwing around with the "evil" guy who "kind of" caused his death) (oh, and yes, McCall-Smith's agenda of disliking South Africa/Africans is quite evident here, in case you didn't pick up on it in the first book), is forgiven by the mother who enjoys an afternoon of catching up with her and the grandchild. So.... if you understood anything in that last sentence, pat yourself on the back.

I finished this book in a day. But despite the things that I didn't like about it, it was a pleasant read that was vaguely satisfying and not at all taxing. Also, there was a nice cliffhanger at the end of the book, when the grandchild notices that Mma Ramotswe's engagement ring is cubic zirconium.

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## **Alan says**

I read "The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency" several years ago. I remember it being fun and fresh and quirky, but it didn't grab me and I wasn't desperate to carry on with the series. Having now read "Tears of the Giraffe", I am eager to find out what happens next. This is, simply put, an exceptionally good book. Every person in the western, "civilised" world should read it and be humbled.

This time around, Alexander McCall Smith delivers a simple and heart-warming story, which is concerned far more with the characters and community than with the little mysteries therein. I'll admit that I was counting the pages and wondering when he would get back to the cases (what little there is of them), but not at all because I was bored - if anything, I wanted the novel to be a hundred pages longer. Nevertheless, this tiny book packs a punch - and I, for one, could almost imagine jumping on the next available plane and visiting Botswana, just to experience the people and the environment for myself.

The writing style is deceptively simple, but it's easy to read between the lines. The author manages to find a balance where he can introduce you to a different way of life without causing you to feel like an outsider. The setting is both worlds-apart and surprisingly familiar, and the characters come right off the page. There are also some cute moments where things are lost in translation; a little discussion about Dr Freud springs to mind and after all, why shouldn't a little boy love his mother?

What stands out the most, and in stark contrast to the majority of western crime and mystery writing, is the all-encompassing sense of hope that Mma Ramotswe brings to the fore. Far from a jaded, cynical, troubled protagonist - this is a large woman with a large heart, who somehow always manages to come across as brave and insightful, where a weaker character might have been painfully naive. She bounds into all sorts of adventure and mischief, taking it all in her stride and never letting the badness rub off on her or wear her down.

I am very much looking forward to reading the rest of the series, and will be recommending this book to everyone I know. It strikes me as a wonderful place to start - and I would probably advise people to give the first book a miss, at least until they've really gotten into the series.

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### **Leo says**

I read the first book of The No.1 Ladies... series a long time ago and I don't remember much about the plot, but I do remember I quite liked it. What appealed most to me was solving mysteries in the Botswana setting, how "simple" were the mysteries and reading about how they live there. Being used to read fast paced thriller or vast conspiracies, it was nice to read something "lighter" but enjoyable in its simplicity. The second book follows the same pattern: a couple of easily-solved mysteries and new developments in Mma. Ramotswa life following the events that happened at the end of the first book. It always a delight to read this books (as it also was to watch the tv show, be sure to check it out) although I find them a bit short. Luckily, there's fifteen of them. This makes for a good light read that everyone can enjoy and it's always interesting to learn new things about Botswana.

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### **Will Byrnes says**

This is Smith's follow up to the The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency and is another delight. The primary tale is Mma Ramotswa helping an American woman find out what happened to her son ten years ago. The Detective agency grows when Precious takes on her secretary as an assistant detective and gives her a case of her own. Ramotswa's fiancé is visiting a local orphanage where he provides mechanic services for free when, after she learns that he is to be married, the madam in charge badgers him to take home two of her charges. How that all works out is a charming tale of its own. As is the case in so much detective fiction, it is place that is central to the story, whether the Fort Lauderdale of John McDonald, the San Francisco of Dashiell Hammet, the Los Angeles of Raymond Chandler or the Botswana of A.M. Smith. Smith has conveyed his love for this country and his affection for his characters using the format of small mysteries. Maybe one could call this detective genre soft-boiled. – A delight in any case. I am looking forward to reading the next four in the series.

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### **Tasha says**

McCall paints a serene picture (although with a bit of mystery and detective work going on) of Botswana and a wonderful cast of characters. I've been wanting to read this second book in the series for a while now and I'm so glad I finally got to it. I don't think I'll wait as long to get to the next in the series.

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