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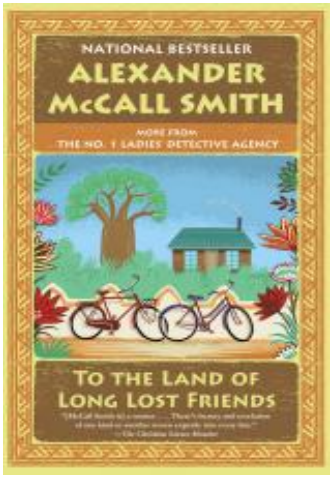
To the Land of Long Lost Friends: No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency (20)

by Alexander McCall Smith



About the Book

In the latest book in the widely beloved *No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* series, Precious Ramotswe takes on a case for a childhood acquaintance and finds that family relationships are always a tricky proposition --- even for Botswana's premier female detective.

Mma Ramotswe has reconnected with an old friend who has been having problems with her daughter. Though Precious feels compelled to lend a hand, she discovers that getting involved in family affairs is always a delicate affair. The young woman appears to be involved with a charismatic preacher. But are his ministrations entirely of a godly nature?

Elsewhere, Charlie is also struggling with a tricky matter of the heart. He wishes to propose to his girlfriend, Queenie-Queenie, but he's struggling to come up with a bride price that will impress her father. When Queenie-Queenie's brother offers to help by giving him a job, the offer may not be quite what Charlie expected.

As always, Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni will offer wise counsel, Mma Makutsi will weigh in with her opinions, and Mma Potokwane will be there with her welcome fruit cake. But in the end, it will be up to Mma Ramotswe to reflect on love, family and the nature of men and women in order to resolve family dramas and remind everyone about all the good things they have in life --- so many, in fact, that it would take far too long to count them.

Discussion Guide

1. This is the 20th book in the *No. 1 Ladies? Detective Agency*. What keeps you coming back to this series?

2. How has Mma Ramotswe grown as a character throughout the novels?

3. Who is your favorite recurring character in the series, and why?

4. The series is set in Botswana. What does this setting lend to the stories? What have you learned about this African country and its people?

5. On page 44, Mma Ramotswe reflects: ?Kindness, after all, did not distinguish between those who merited it, and those who did not. It was like rain, she thought. It fell everywhere and made everything green and new and alive once more. That is what it did.? What do you think of this sentiment? In what ways does Mma Ramotswe show these kindnesses?

6. ?Ask anybody what their idea of heaven is, and the answer will reveal that person?s soul? (p. 47). Mma Ramotswe thinks heaven is like a peaceful garden. How would Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni envision heaven? What about Mma Makutsi?

7. What is Mma Ramotswe?s relationship to Mma Potokwane? Do you have friends like this?

8. Why does Mma Ramotswe go to see Nametso at the Botswana Diamond Sorting Consortium? How does she convince the guard to talk to her? What does she discover?

9. Discuss the relationship between Charlie and Queenie-Queenie. Do you think they are meant for each other?

10. What is Hector?s proposition to Charlie? Is it helping Charlie or is it wrong? Does Hector see it that way? What about Queenie-Queenie?s father? How does Charlie decide to deal with the situation?

11. How is Charlie?s concern about his relationship with Queenie-Queenie resolved? What do you think of this turn of events?

12. Mma Ramotswe often reflects on continuity --- of the birds and the trees and the people of Botswana --- but is quick to say that progress in important, too. Do you think the two are mutually exclusive? Do you favor one over the other?

13. What do you think about Mma Ramotswe?s taking in of Daisy? Precious?s impetuousness in matters of giving is wonderful, but should she have consulted with her husband before taking in a child? Why or why not? What does Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni think of the situation? How is this a reflection of their marriage as a whole?

14. What do you think of Mma Boko? What role does she play in the story?

15. Mma Potokwane says a few words to Preacher Flat Ponto. Could someone else have had the same effect? What would Mma Makutsi or Mma Ramotswe say? What change would their words have on Ponto?s behavior?

16. How is Calviniah?s problem solved? Why did Nametso cut her mother out of her life? How does Calviniah respond when Nametso returns?

17. Much is made about equality between women and men in this story. What is Charlie?s double-standard? What is Mma Makutsi?s?

18. Mma Ramotswe and Mma Mukutsi recognize each other?s personality quirks without mentioning them (Mma Ramotswe sees Mma Makutsi?s need for attention, Mma Makutsi sees Mma Ramotswe?s overdeveloped devotion to

President Seretse Khama). Do you do the same? What do you think your friends note about your behavior?

19. Is the situation with Daisy resolved? What will happen to her? Why do you think Daisy?s sickness is never named?

20. What do you think is next for Mma Ramotswe?s future?

Author Bio

Alexander McCall Smith is the author of the *No. 1 Ladies? Detective Agency* novels and a number of other series and stand-alone books. His works have been translated into more than 40 languages and have been bestsellers throughout the world. He lives in Scotland.

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