

After last month's demanding read, it was felt that something lighter would help the group to relax, so the book chosen was *The Kalahari Typing School for Men* by Alexander McCall Smith. This is the fourth volume in the *No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* series and, although the main characters come from previous novels, the plot of this one stands on its own. Mma (Precious) Ramotswe and Mma Makutsi return, but now reside above the garage of Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors owned by Mr J. L. B. Matekoni, who was Mma Ramotswe's fiancé, which is part of the reason for the change of venue. Mma Makutsi also did the accounts for Mr J. L. B. Matekoni and had very successfully run the garage when he had fallen ill. Now that Mr J. L. B. Matekoni was well again, Mma Makutsi felt in need of a challenge. She had been trained at the Botswana Secretarial College, where the students were all women, and it occurred to her that there might be an opening for a business teaching men to type. With backing from Mr J. L. B. Matekoni and Mma Ramotswe, Mma Makutsi acquired several battered old typewriters from the College and set the garage apprentices the task of repairing them. Thus was born *The Kalahari Typing School for Men*.

The cases taken by the *No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* do not involve murder and mayhem and Botswana is depicted as a relatively gentle and somewhat old-fashioned country. Mma Ramotswe learns that she faces competition in the form of the Satisfaction Guaranteed Detective Agency, with its strapline *Ex-CID, Ex-New York, Ex-cellent*, set up by Cephass Buthelezi. This is not particularly welcome news for Mma Ramotswe, but it turns out that Rra Buthelezi is not quite as he appears, since he fails to keep watch on the husband of Mma Selelipeng as asked, despite being paid a large fee in advance.

While Mma Makutsi is setting up the typing school, Mma Ramotswe takes on the case of Mr Molefelo, who is suffering from a serious case of guilt. When he was a student of engineering, he had made a girl pregnant and had stolen and sold a radio from his landlady so that he could pay for an abortion. Now he was wealthy, but desperately wished to apologise to the girl and his landlady, and asked Mma Ramotswe to find them, which she was able to do. In the meantime, Mma Makutsi finds herself falling for one of her students, Mr Bernard Selelipeng, who is in the diamond business and is particularly well dressed. In an amusing twist, Mma Selelipeng goes to Mma Ramotswe to find out what Bernard is up to. She soon discovers what is happening and is able to resolve the situation without hurting Mma Makutsi.

There was the suggestion that the book was a little patronising, although reference is made to the HIV/AIDS epidemic through mention of 'the sickness'. It seems that Botswana is a country with considerable respect for an older and quieter way of life.

March – *The Secret Barrister* by A Barrister

April – *Milkman* by Anna Burns

May – *The Perfect Golden Circle* by Benjamin Myers