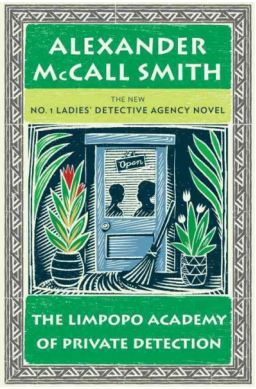
The Limpopo Academy of Private Detection



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ISBN:
9780307378408

If you've been following the lovely No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency mysteries set in Botswana, you'll be familiar with the detective guidebook that Mma Ramotswe and Mma Makutsi have used for years as their guidebook. Whenever they are flummoxed in an investigation or when a particularly conniving criminal seems to be getting away with breaking the law and harming innocent people, they have always searched *The Principles of Private Detection* for advice on how to crack a trying case.

And now in the latest of the series, *The Limpopo Academy of Private Detection*, guess who has just arrived in town? None other than Clovis Andersen himself, the esteemed American author of this detective manual. When Mma Ramotswe, the head of the No. 1 Detective Agency, asks her husband garage mechanic, J.L.B. Matekoni, to guess what famous person has come to town, he immediately (to Mma's great disappointment) guesses Clorox Andersen. Despite the misnaming, how did he know?

Clovis, recently widowed, has been invited to Africa by a librarian who probably has a romantic interest in him. And when he drops by the detective agency both women sleuths are quite star struck.

Good thing he's arrived in town because Fanwell, Matekoni's apprentice, has run afoul of the law by helping an old friend fix a car. Unfortunately, the friend was peddling stolen cars so the police arrest Fanwell. Also, the energetic Mma Potokwane is disheartened because the board at her beloved orphanage has voted to create one huge cafeteria for the children rather than continue to let them eat in the more personal, family-like kitchens in the individual homes. Of course Mma Potokwane fights this and Ditso Ditso, a wealthy businessman who is on the board, dismisses her for insubordination.

Throughout the book, Mma Makutsi is adjusting to her new role as the wife of the successful owner of the Double Comfort Furniture Store. In fact, the two of them are building their first house. Wouldn't you know it a dishonest builder is messing with their dream of a perfect home? And is disrespectful to the new wife to boot.

Not only has Mma Makutsi (97% score at the Secretarial School) moved up in the world with her marriage but she has also been promoted at the agency to assistant detective although Mma Ramotswe forgets this too often. But the two ladies, the skinny younger one, and the older more "traditionally-built" woman drive out to the veldt in the old white van, lovingly restored by Mr. Matekoni. McCall Smith's great love for the African bush is extremely evident in this scene. An elderly donkey rider with a hat just like Mma Ramotswe's late father rescues them when their

van stalls in sand. He gives them a ride on a donkey cart so they can travel through the African night the way it was meant to be explored, slowly under great strands of stars with the scents and sounds of the natural world pouring over you.

The big surprise in the book is...well--I shouldn't give it away, but Clovis Andersen, the great writer and detective hails from a place that you will all be familiar with. Read it to discover where that place is and to escape this hot, long summer and revel in a refreshing dip into the people and beauty of Botswana.

For another exotic mystery, try Colin Cotterill's *Killed at the Whim of a Hat*; it's set in Thailand.

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Posted by Dory L. on Aug 6, 2012

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