



Mma. Ramotswe Returns

BOOK REVIEW



By Eleanor Rodgerson, MD

THE FULL CUPBOARD OF LIFE, Alexander McCall Smith, Pantheon Books, New York. The author is a Professor of medical law at Edinburgh University.

I SANK INTO MY CHAIR, raised my feet, and sighed. How nice! Precious Ramotswe of the No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency in Gabarone, Botswana was back in her fifth book of philosophy and experience and evidently doing well.

I opened the book and read that she sat in her office and "could gaze out of the window out beyond the acacia trees, over the grass and the scrub bush, to the hills in their blue haze of heat. It was such a noble country, and so wide, stretching for mile upon mile to brown horizons at the very edge of Africa."

Mma Ramotswe was busy with her clients and concern for Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni, to whom she was engaged. He was "not only the best mechanic in Botswana - he would do anything for one who needed help and, in a world of increasing dishonesty, he still practiced the old Botswana morality. He was a good man, which when all is said and done, is the finest thing you can say about any man. He was a good man."

It was worrisome that no date was set for the wedding. "If she was going to remain an engaged lady, then she would make the most of it." She would read a bit more, join a club of some sort, and continue her detective agency.

There was an Orphan Town nearby run by Mma. Silvia Potokwane, a matron always looking for ways to raise money. Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni was often persuaded - usually with a raisin cake - to repair and replace whatever was needed in the machinery line. Without realizing what was happening, he found himself agreeing to a parachute jump and he was terrified. Not even the improved standing this adventure made with his two lazy apprentices could relieve his fear

One day she visited her cousin in the town where she had grown up and the two "traditionally built" ladies enjoyed gossiping and catching up on the news. A lying politician was discussed. He had promised water for every house and never brought it. "It would be different if we had a new government," said the cousin.

"'Would it?' asked Mma. Ramotswe. She wondered whether one set of people who looked remarkably like another set of people would run things any differently.

Mma. Ramotswe had a plan to stop her fiance's airplane jump. However, "He is not a child - you cannot push men around. They do not like it. They like to feel they are making their own decisions, but we have to let men think that the decisions are theirs. It is an act of kindness on the part of women."

She and the secretary often chatted. "When I was a girl I used to watch little boys playing and I saw what they did. Now that I am a lady, I know that there is not much difference.

Boys and men are the same people, in different clothes. Boys wear short trousers and men wear long trousers. But they are just the same if you take their trousers off." The secretary stared and Mma. Ramotswe added quickly, "That is not what I meant to say. What I meant to say is that trousers mean nothing. Men think like boys, and, if you understand boys, then you understand men. That is what I meant to say."

The epidemic of AIDS was not mentioned except for the wasting-away death of the secretary's brother. The Anglican Hospice had helped care for him.

The Full Cupboard of Life is a satisfying book and made me anticipate more.

ebr8809@aol.com

Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society
5380 Elvas Avenue #100 • Sacramento, CA 95819
916.452.2671 PH • 916.452.2690 FX • Email: info@ssvms.org

Copyright © 2000-2008 Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society - All Right's Reserved