The "No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency" series
By Alexander McCall-Smith

The No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency [1998]
In contemporary Botswana, sleuth Precious Ramotswe decides to go against tradition and start her own business – a detective agency. Soon, she is in the thick of several perplexing cases. This delightfully engaging first title in the new mystery series introduces Mma Precious Ramotswe, who is drawn to her profession to help people with problems in their lives. She’s immediately hired to track down a missing husband, uncover a con man, follow a wayward daughter, and find a missing 11-year-old boy.

Tears of the Giraffe [2000]
Precious Ramotswe is the eminently sensible and cunning proprietor of the only ladies detective agency in Botswana. In Tears of the Giraffe, she tracks a wayward wife, uncovers an unscrupulous maid, and searches for an American man who disappeared into the plains ten years ago. In the midst of resolving uncertainties, pondering her impending marriage to a good, kind man, Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni, and the promotion of her talented secretary (a graduate of the Botswana Secretarial College, with a mark of 97 per cent), she also finds her family suddenly and unexpectedly increased by two. Meanwhile, her betrothal to Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni provokes a hostile reaction from Mr. Matekoni’s unscrupulous maid, who quickly begins plotting the disintegration of the engagement.

Morality for Beautiful Girls [2001]
Precious Ramotswe, founder and owner of the only detective agency for the concerns of both ladies and others, investigates the alleged poisoning of the brother of an important “Government Man,” and the moral character of the four finalists of the Miss Beauty and Integrity Contest, the winner of which will almost certainly be a contestant for the title of Miss Botswana. Yet her business is having money problems, and when other difficulties arise at her fiancé’s Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors, she discovers the reliable Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni is more complicated than he seems.

The Kalahari Typing School for Men [2002]
Now that her business, the No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency, is firmly established, the agency’s founder, Precious Ramotswe, can look upon her life with pride: she’s reached her late thirties (“the finest age to be”) and she has a house, two adopted children, a good fiancé, and many satisfied customers. But life is never without its problems. Mma Ramotswe is asked to locate two women. Her adopted son has a somewhat troubling hobby. Her assistant wants a husband but can’t find one, and is starting a typing school for men. Meanwhile, the Satisfaction Guaranteed Detective Agency has opened up across town and seems to be getting all the attention. In this latest volume from Alexander McCall-Smith’s The No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency series, Precious manages to cope with these and other more serious problems with her customary mix of insight and good-heartedness.

Blue Shoes and Happiness [2006]
In this latest installment in the beloved series, there is considerable excitement at The No. 1 Ladies’ Detective Agency. A cobra has been found in Precious Ramotswe’s office. Then a nurse from a local medical clinic reveals that faulty blood-pressure readings are being recorded there. And Botswana has a new advice columnist, Aunty Emang, whose advice is rather curt for Mma Ramotswe. And there are a number of interesting cases, including the theft of a painting, the disappearance of an American man, and the mysterious appearance of a pumpkin. But what finally rattles Mma Ramotswe is a visitor who forces her to confront a secret from her past. All this unfolds against the sunlit background of Mma Ramotswe’s beloved homeland, Botswana - a land of empty spaces, echoing skies, and an endless supply of soothing bush tea.

The official Alexander McCall-Smith website: www.mccallsmith.com

Other Series by Alexander McCall-Smith (as of January 2007):
The Scotland Street series [3 volumes to date]
The von Igelfeld series [3 short volumes]