



Minghella, Anthony. "The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency ." 23 March 2008.

I. Wanna. Review. Something. Close. To. My. Heart. (imagine I'm clapping between words)

Despite growing up in Botswana, I never heard about this show until last year. This is devastating to me. Imagine, growing up your whole life, obsessed with TV shows and never realising this fantastic piece of fiction was shot in your backyard? Unfathomable. I don't know if people even know where Botswana is on a map unless you are an avid watcher of nature documentaries. I don't expect anyone to know or care about this little country with a population smaller than some medium-sized cities.

Based on Alexander McCall Smith's beloved series of novels, *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* TV show brings to life the charming world of Botswana's first female detective, Mma Precious Ramotswe. The show aired in 2008 and was directed by Anthony Minghella and produced by the BBC in collaboration with HBO, capturing the essence of McCall Smith's stories through vibrant visuals and heartfelt performances.

Botswana is a bright culture, filled with amazing people, the landscapes and natural wildlife are parallel to none. Yes, it's a third-world country that suffers from corruption and drought. I'm honestly just amazed that 16 years ago, someone once decided to put some money into a TV show that not only features a strong cast of African women, but that tackles some deeply troubling issues common in Botswana. The show handles these themes with sensitivity and respect, offering viewers a nuanced portrayal of Botswana's social dynamics. Mma Ramotswe's approach to detective work is not just about uncovering the truth but also about understanding and helping people. This philosophy sets the show apart from typical detective dramas.

Filmed on location in Botswana, the series captures the country's stunning landscapes and vibrant culture. The cinematography highlights the beauty of the African continent, from the bustling streets of Gaborone to the serene expanses of the Kalahari Desert.

The TV series closely follows the first book's plot, introducing viewers to Mma Ramotswe (played by Jill Scott), who uses her inheritance to open a detective agency in Gaborone, Botswana. The series deftly adapts various cases from the novels, blending them into a cohesive narrative that showcases Mma Ramotswe's investigative skills and deep understanding of human nature.

In the show, Mma Ramotswe's backstory is heartbreaking, she was married to a horrible man who would physically abuse her, and she finally left that man after his abuse caused a miscarriage. I think that's why Mma Ramotswe is so dead set on helping other women in Gaborone, as we see most of her clients are women. She feels that it is her responsibility to bring justice to the people who have been abused and neglected.

Also, there is something I find interesting, which is the topic of African Witchcraft in this show. Let me tell you, it's abundant, when I still lived in Botswana there were certain places you didn't go because a Witch Doctor lived there. I respect other cultures and I don't care what people believe in but the issue arises when belief or religion begins hurting people. These are called "Muti Killings", muti meaning medicine which is ironic in the worst ways, killing people and using them in "*medicine*" is quite horrific. (Labuschagne)

In the 2004 issue of the *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling*, Labuschagne states, "Muti murder is defined as a murder in which body parts are removed from a live victim for the sole purpose of using the victim's body parts medicinally."

This scenario is used in the pilot of the series, a 12-year-old boy is kidnapped from his home and no one knows what happened to him, but Mma Ramotswe is on the case. In the best-case scenario, she ends up finding the boy alive and returns him to his family, but just as she expected, this boy was kidnapped to be used for muti. Thank God, she was there in time to save him, and he got to keep all his fingers, toes and other little bits.

Each episode features a mix of mystery, personal stories, and cultural insights, staying true to the spirit of the books. The show's adaptation is faithful yet flexible, making slight adjustments to suit the visual medium while preserving the essence of McCall Smith's storytelling.

Jill Scott's portrayal of Mma Ramotswe is both charismatic and nuanced. She brings warmth, intelligence, and quiet strength to the character, making her a compelling and relatable protagonist. Mma Ramotswe is a large black woman, which is usually considered to be more attractive in Botswana culture but the beauty standards have turned more westernised, preferring slimmer bodies. Mma Ramotswe constantly is torn between people making fun of her weight or fetishising her. Culturally, the weight of a

woman would signify how well a husband or father would treat them, so the bigger they were, the more they were loved. (Pradeilles et al.)

Anika Noni Rose as Mma Grace Makutsi, Ramotswe's fiercely loyal and quirky secretary, delivers a standout performance that adds humour and depth to the show. Her dedication to her work and to Mma Ramotswe is heartwarming as they grow together and gain respect for each other.

Lucian Msamati as Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni, the gentle and reliable mechanic who becomes Ramotswe's love interest, provides a solid counterpart to Scott's Ramotswe. The romance between them is slow-burning but very sweet to watch as he tries to overcome her mistrust of romantic relationships since her abusive husband.

Can I just add, for a little bit of fun information, did you know Idris fucking Elba is in this show? I was floored when I saw him for the first time. And is amazing in his role, he plays this scary businessman who kidnaps children to use for muti. Luckily he was arrested because of Mma Ramotswe's investigation skills.



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Also, David Oyelowo did a fantastic performance, I mean the talent he has in his little finger just made him a pleasure to watch on screen. I had the pleasure of meeting Oyelowo on the set of *A United Kingdom* (2016) when I was an extra on set. He was nice. I liked him. David if you're reading this, Hi :). He's not reading this is he? Damn.

Conclusion

The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency TV show is a delightful and faithful adaptation of Alexander McCall Smith's novels. With its engaging characters, beautiful setting, and thoughtful exploration of cultural and societal themes, the series offers a refreshing take on the detective genre. Jill Scott's captivating performance as Mma Ramotswe, along with the strong supporting cast, makes this a must-watch for fans of the books and newcomers alike. The show's celebration of Botswana's culture and its positive, uplifting tone make it a standout in the world of television dramas.

List of Sources

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