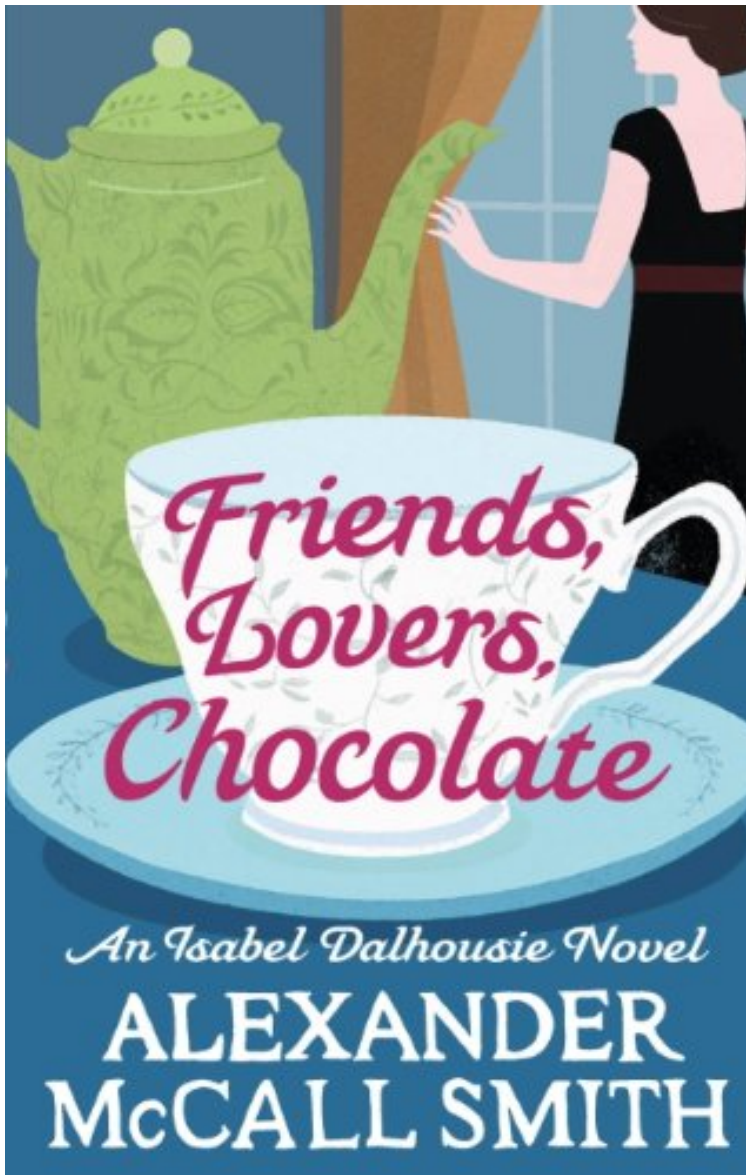


[Read now] File size: 71.Mb

# Friends, Lovers, Chocolate



*Par Alexander McCall Smith*  
*ebooks / Download PDF / \*ePub /*  
*DOC / audiobook*

Dtails sur le produit Rang parmi les ventes : #153460 dans eBooksPubli le: 2008-10-02Sorti le: 2008-10-02Format: Ebook Kindle

[Read now] Friends, Lovers, Chocolate

**Par Alexander McCall Smith : Friends, Lovers, Chocolate** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Friends, Lovers, Chocolate:

Download

Read Online

## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurIsabel Dalhousie thinks often of friends, sometimes of lovers, and on occasion of chocolate. As an Edinburgh philosopher she is certain of where she stands. She can review a book called In

Praise of Sin with panache and conviction, but real life is . . . well, perhaps a bit more challenging - particularly when it comes to her feelings for Jamie, a younger man who should have married her niece, Cat. Jamie's handsomeness leaves Isabel feeling distinctly uneasy, and ethically disturbed. 'I am a philosopher', she thinks, 'but I am also a woman'. And more disturbance is in store. When Cat takes a break in Italy, Isabel agrees to run her delicatessen. One of the customers, she discovers, has recently had a heart transplant and is now being plagued by memories that cannot be rationally explained and which he feels do not belong to

him. Isabel is intrigued. So intrigued that she finds herself rushing headlong into a dangerous investigation.

But she still has time to think about the things that possess her - things like love and friendship, and, of course, temptation. The last of these comes in many forms - chocolate, for example, or seductive Italians . . .

..co.uk If you've got the key to literary success, it is a risky business indeed to make an abrupt change of subject that may lose you some readers. Has Alexander McCall Smith done this with *Friends, Lovers, Chocolate*? After all, his much-loved No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency Series has won him a legion of admirers, with its vividly evoked African settings, quirky plotting and (most of all) his likeable, 'generously proportioned' sleuth Precious Ramotswe. These gentle, indulgently enjoyable books were quite unlike anything else being published today, and found a ready audience. But McCall Smith, not content to rest on his laurels, produced *The Sunday Philosophy Club*, with a new female detective, the philosopher Isabel Dalhousie. This was a very different kettle of fish, with an Edinburgh setting replacing sultry Botswana, and more philosophical concerns replacing the homely adages. The book was a success, without seducing readers in quite the numbers that the previous series had done. And now we have the second outing for Isabel Dalhousie -- and *Friends, Lovers, Chocolate* bids fair to cement McCall Smith's new heroine in readers' affections though she'll never replace Precious. Isabel is trying to deal with her uncertain feelings for an attractive young man, Jamie, who is planning to marry her niece, Cat. Things become even more complicated when Cat takes an Italian vacation and asks Isabel to look after her delicatessen. Isabel finds out that one of the customers has had a heart transplant, and seems to be accessing memories that he is convinced belong to another person. As Isabel digs deeper, things suddenly become dangerous. The appeal of the new book is (like its predecessor) more to the mind than the emotions, but it's none the worse for that. McCall Smith's brittle dialogue and situations are as entertainingly off-kilter as ever, and even fans of the ample Precious should put this on their lists. --Barry Forshaw

Chapter one The man in the brown Harris tweed overcoat double-breasted with three small leather-covered buttons on the cuffs made his way slowly along the street that led down the spine of Edinburgh. He was aware of the seagulls which had drifted in from the shore and which were swooping down onto the cobblestones, picking up fragments dropped by somebody who had been careless with a fish. Their mewings were the loudest sound in the street at that moment, as there was little traffic and the city was unusually quiet. It was October, it was mid-morning, and there were few people about. A boy on the other side of the road, scruffy and tousle-haired, was leading a dog along with a makeshift leash a length of string. The dog, a small Scottish terrier, seemed unwilling to follow the boy and glanced for a moment at the man as if imploring him to intervene to stop the tugging and the pulling. There must be a saint for such dogs, thought the man; a saint for such dogs in their small prisons. The man reached the St. Marys Street crossroads. On the corner on his right was a pub, the Worlds End, a place of resort for fiddlers and singers; on his left, Jeffrey Street curved round and dipped under the great arch of the North Bridge. Through the gap in the buildings, he could see the flags on top of the Balmoral Hotel: the white-on-blue cross of the Saltire, the Scottish flag, the familiar diagonal stripes of the Union Jack. There was a stiff breeze from the north, from Fife, which made the flags stand out from their poles with pride, like the flags on the prow of a ship ploughing into the wind. And that, he thought, was what Scotland was like: a small vessel pointed out to sea, a small vessel buffeted by the wind. He crossed the street and continued down the hill. He walked past a fishmonger, with its gilt fish sign suspended over the street, and the entrance to a close, one of those small stone passages that ran off the street underneath the tenements. And then he was where he wanted to be, outside the Canongate Kirk, the high-gabled church set just a few paces off the High Street. At the top of the gable, stark against the light blue of the sky, the arms of the kirk, a stag's antlers, gilded, against the background of a similarly golden cross. He entered the gate and looked up. One might be in Holland, he thought, with that gable; but there were too many reminders of Scotland: the wind, the sky, the grey stone. And there was what he had come to see, the stone which he visited every year on this day, this day when the poet had died at the age of twenty-four. He walked across the grass towards the stone, its shape reflecting the gable of the kirk, its lettering still clear after two hundred years. Robert Burns himself had paid for this stone to be erected, in homage to his brother in the muse, and had written the lines of its inscription: This simple stone directs Pale Scotia's way/To pour her sorrows o'er her poet's dust. He stood quite still. There were others who could be visited here. Adam Smith, whose days had been filled with thoughts of markets and economics and who had coined an entire science, had his stone here, more impressive than this, more ornate; but this was the one that made one weep. He reached into a pocket of his overcoat and took out a small black notebook of the sort that used to advertise itself as waterproof. Opening it, he read the lines that he had written out himself, copied from a collection of Robert

Gariochs poems. He read aloud, but in a low voice, although there was nobody present save for him and the dead: Canongait kirkyaird in the failing year Is auld and grey, the wee roseirs are bare, Five gulls leem white agin the dirty air. Why are they here? Theres naething for them here Why are we here oursels? Yes, he thought. Why am I here myself? Because I admire this man, this Robert Fergusson, who wrote such beautiful words in the few years given him, and because at least somebody should remember and come here on this day each year. And this, he told himself, was the last time that he would be able to do this. This was his final visit. If their predictions were correct, and unless something turned up, which he thought was unlikely, this was the last of his pilgrimages. He looked down at his notebook again. He continued to read out loud. The chiselled Scots words were taken up by the wind and carried away: Strang, present dool Ruggs at my hairt. Lichtlie this gin ye daur: Here Robert Burns knelt and kissed the mool. Strong, present sorrow Tugs at my heart. Treat this lightly if you dare: Here Robert Burns knelt and kissed the soil. He took a step back. There was nobody there to observe the tears which had come to his eyes, but he wiped them away in embarrassment. Strang, present dool. Yes. And then he nodded towards the stone and turned round, and that was when the woman came running up the path. He saw her almost trip as the heel of a shoe caught in a crack between two paving stones, and he cried out. But she recovered herself and came on towards him, waving her hands. Ian. Ian. She was breathless. And he knew immediately what news she had brought him, and he looked at her gravely. She said, Yes. And then she smiled, and leant forward to embrace him. When? he asked, stuffing the notebook back into his pocket. Right away, she said. Now. Right now. Theyll take you down there straightaway. They began to walk back along the path, away from the stone. He had been warned not to run, and could not, as he would rapidly become breathless. But he could walk quite fast on the flat, and they were soon back at the gate to the kirk, where the black taxi was waiting, ready to take them. Whatever happens, he said as they climbed into the taxi, come back to this place for me. Its the one thing I do every year. On this day. Youll be back next year, she said, reaching out to take his hand. On the other side of Edinburgh, in another season, Cat, an attractive young woman in her mid-twenties, stood at Isabel Dalhousies front door, her finger poised over the bell. She gazed at the stonework. She noticed that in parts the discoloration was becoming more pronounced. Above the triangular gable of her aunts bedroom window, the stone was flaking slightly, and a patch had fallen off here and there, like a ripened scab, exposing fresh skin below. This slow decline had its own charms; a house, like anything else, should not be denied the dignity of natural ageing within reason, of course. For the most part, the house was in good order; a discreet and sympathetic house, in spite of its size. And it was known, too, for its hospitality. Everyone who called there irrespective of their mission would be courteously received and offered, if the time was appropriate, a glass of dry white wine in spring and summer and red in autumn and winter. They would then be listened to, again with courtesy, for Isabel believed in giving moral attention to everyone. This made her profoundly egalitarian, though not in the non-discriminating sense of many contemporary egalitarians, who sometimes ignore the real moral differences between people (good and evil are not the same, Isabel would say). She felt uncomfortable with moral relativists and their penchant for non-judgementalism. But of course we must be judgemental, she said, when there is something to be judged. Isabel had studied philosophy and had a part-time job as general editor of the *Journal of Applied Ethics*. It was not a demanding job in terms of the time it required, and it was badly paid; in fact, at Isabels own suggestion, rising production costs had been partly offset by a cut in her own salary. Not that payment mattered; her share of the Louisiana and Gulf Land Company, left to her by her mother her sainted American mother, as she called her provided more than she could possibly need. Isabel was, in fact, wealthy, although that was a word that she did not like to use, especially of herself. She was indifferent to material wealth, although she was attentive to what she described, with characteristic modesty, as her minor projects of giving (which were actually very generous). And what are these projects? Cat had once asked. Isabel looked embarrassed. Charitable ones, I suppose. Or eleemosynary if you prefer long words. Nice word that eleemosynary . . . But I dont normally talk about it. Cat frowned. There were things about her aunt that puzzled her. If one gave to charity, then why not mention it? One must be discreet, Isabel continued. She was not one for circumlocution, but she believed that one should never refer to ones own good works. A good work, once drawn attention to by its author, inevitably became an exercise in self-congratulation. That was what was wrong with the lists of names of donors in the opera programmes. Would they have given if their generosity was not going to be recorded in the programme? Isabel thought that in many cases they would not. Of course, if the only way one could raise money for the arts was through appealing to vanity, then it was probably worth doing. But her own name never appeared in such lists, a fact which had not gone unnoticed in Edinburgh. Shes mean, whispered some.

She gives nothing away. They were wrong, of course, as the uncharitable so often are. In one year, Isabel, unrecorded by name in any programme and a...