



In hopes of reprinting some part of his terrific Ted Sturgeon issue of LAN'S LANTERN (1991), I am searching for George "Lan" Lascowski's survivors and for the contributors to that issue (#36). Any assistance will be met with credits in the next edition of my genzine, CHALLENGER, and my effusive gratitude. Also, any directions towards published articles or anecdotes about Ted will likewise be greatly appreciated--as will your own memories or impressions of Sturgeon and/or his work. Help! [-ghliii]

---

### **Mice on the March:**

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/04/29/australia-mice-plague-animals/>

"Australia, right now, feels a little biblical. There was a terrible drought, then the worst bush fires ever recorded. A flood came next. Now it's the turn of the mice.

The scale of the mouse plague is hard to comprehend. In the western districts of New South Wales (NSW), the country's most populous state, millions of mice are now on the march. There are also serious infestations in southern Queensland, Victoria and South Australia."

---

### **This Week's Reading** (book comments by Evelyn C. Leeper):

I have been listening to the audiobooks of the "No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency" series and have decided that it jumped the shark around book five (THE FULL CUPBOARD OF LIFE). That seems to be when McCall Smith started writing more about how wonderful Botswana is, how important cattle are, how living in villages is better than living in towns, how the old Motswana ways were so much better than the modern ways, and on and on about Mma Ramotswe's (or rather, McCall Smith's) general philosophy of life. (Of course, it is the "modern" ways that let Ma Ramotswe have a detective agency and let her raise those two orphans rather than let the boy be buried alive and his sister abandoned.) Each book seems to have less and less detection; reviews imply there is really none at all in the latest volumes. In addition, with book six, McCall Smith brings in Violet Sepotho as a sort of distaff Moriarty or Fu Manchu, and her persistence through more than half a dozen books was part of what drove me away from the newer books of the series. Now I also hear that the character of Mma Makutsi has also changed, and not for the better.

These are problems with many series--the author hears what was popular in book N, and decides to put more of it in book N+1. In this case, people liked the Motswana asides, so McCall Smith added more in each book. (I guess people also liked Mma Makutsi's "97%" shtick, because it also seems to increase over the series.) But while there are brief references in many Sherlock Holmes stories to his dislike of inactivity, or in the Poirot novels to "the little gray cells," they don't replace the plot.

Other irritations include the constant reference to "the younger apprentice" without ever naming him. When people who work with him say things like, "Call that younger apprentice in here," rather than "Call Fan in here" (he is eventually named), it just sounds weird. And the idea that some thug who is threatening Mr. J. L. B. Matekoni will be intimidated by the matron of an orphan farm berating him is very unlikely. Would some gangster here be stopped by a teacher chastising him? (And can anyone explain why he is "Mr. J. L. B. Matekoni" and not "Rra Matekoni"?)

So my bottom line is that I recommend the first four or five novels, but am less enthusiastic about the series as it progresses. Then again, it has been wildly popular considerably past my recommended stopping point. (Even without repetitive aspects, most series continue too long. The consensus seems to be, for example, that one should read Isaac Asimov's original "Foundation" trilogy and then stop.) [-ecl]

---

Mark Leeper  
mleeper@optonline.net

### Quote of the Week:

What is eternity? You're on the checkout line at a supermarket. There are seven people in front of you. They are all old. They all have two carts and coupons for every item. They are all paying by check. None of them have ID. It's the checkout girl's first day on the job. She doesn't speak any English. Take away fifteen minutes from that, and you begin to get an idea of what eternity is.

--Emo Philips

### Tweet

Go to [our home page](#) THE MT VOID