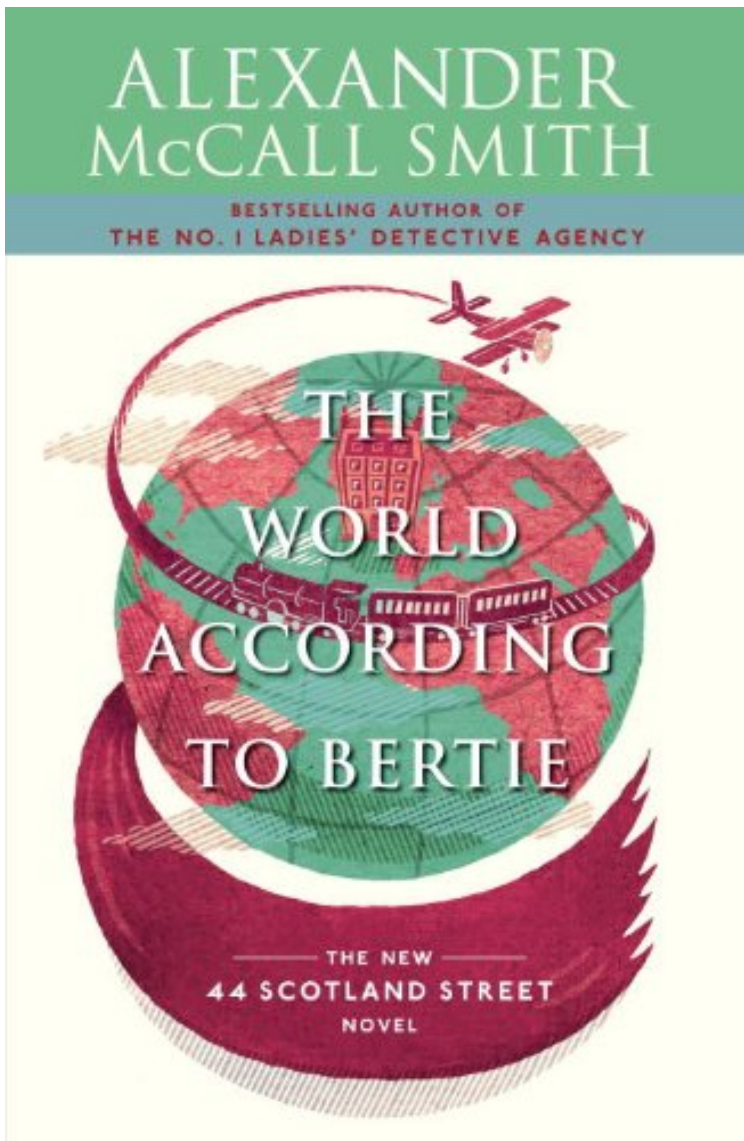


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The World According to Bertie



Par Alexander McCall Smith
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteur44 SCOTLAND STREET - Book 4 The residents and neighbors of 44 Scotland Street and the city of Edinburgh come to vivid life in these gently satirical, wonderfully perceptive serial novels, featuring six-year-old Bertie, a remarkably precocious boyjust ask his mother. There is never a quiet moment on 44 Scotland Street. In The World According to Bertie, Pat deals with the reappearance of Bruce, which has her heart skippingand not in a pleasant way. Angus Lordie's dog Cyril has been taken away by the authorities, accused of being a serial biter. Unexpectedly, Domenica has offered to help free him. As usual, Big Lou is still looking for love, and handing out coffee and advice to the always contemplative Matthew. And Bertie, the beleaguered Italian-speaking six year old prodigy, now has a little brother, Ulysses, who Bertie hopes will help distract his pushy mother Irene. Beautifully observed, cleverly detailed, The World

According to Bertie is classic McCall Smith and a treat for his avid fans as well as his first time readers. From the Trade Paperback edition. Extrait Chapter 1. In Hanover Street. Watch Out, Pat, Bruce Is Back . . . Or Is He? Pat saw Bruce at ten o'clock on a Saturday morning, or at least that is when she thought she saw him. An element of doubt there certainly was. This centred not on the time of the sighting, but on the identity of the person sighted; for this was one of those occasions when one wonders whether the eye, or even the memory, has played a trick. And such tricks can be extraordinary, as when one is convinced that one has seen the late General de Gaulle coming out of a cinema, or when, against all reasonable probability, one thinks one has spotted Luciano Pavarotti on a train between Glasgow and Paisley; risible events, of course, but ones which underline the proposition that one's eyes are not always to be believed. She saw Bruce while she was travelling on a bus from one side of Edinburgh the South Side, where she now lived to the New Town, on the north side of the city, where she worked three days a week in the gallery owned by her boyfriend, Matthew. The bus had descended with lumbering stateliness down the Mound, past the National Gallery of Scotland, and had turned into Hanover Street, narrowly missing an insouciant pedestrian at the corner. Pat had seen the near-miss it was by the merest whisker, she thought and had winced, but it was just at that moment, as the bus laboured up Hanover Street towards the statue of George IV, that she saw a young man walking in the opposite direction, a tall figure with Bruce's characteristic en brosse hairstyle and wearing precisely the sort of clothes that Bruce liked to wear on a Saturday: a rugby jersey celebrating Scotland's increasingly ancient Triple Crown victory and a pair of stone-coloured trousers. Her eye being caught by the rugby jersey and the stone-coloured trousers, she turned her head sharply. Bruce! But now she could see only the back of his head, and after a moment she could not see even that; Bruce, or his double, had merged into a knot of people standing on the corner of Princes Street and Pat lost sight of him. She looked ahead. The bus would stop in a few yards; she could disembark and make her way down to Princes Street to see if it really was him. But then she reminded herself that if she did that she would arrive late at the gallery, and Matthew needed her to be there on time; he had stressed that. He had an appointment, he said, with a client who was proposing to place several important Colourist pictures on the market. She did not want to hold him up, and quite apart from that there was the question of whether she would want to see Bruce, even if it proved to be him. She thought on balance that she did not. Bruce had been her flatmate when she had first moved into 44 Scotland Street. At first, she had been rather in awe of him after all, he was so confident in his manner, so self-assured and she at the time had been so much more diffident. Then things had changed. Bruce was undoubtedly good-looking a fact of which he was fully aware and of which he was very willing to take advantage; he knew very well that women found him attractive, and he assumed that Pat would prove no exception. Unfortunately, it transpired that he was right, and Pat found herself drawn to Bruce in a way which she did not altogether like. All this could have become very messy, but at the last moment, before her longing had been translated into anything beyond mere looking, she had come to her senses and decided that Bruce was an impossible narcissist. She fought to free herself of his spell, and she did. And then, having lost his job at the firm of surveyors (after being seen enjoying an intimate lunch in the Caf St Honor with the wife of the firm's senior partner), Bruce decided that Edinburgh was too small for him and had moved to London. People who do that often then discover that London is too big for them, much to the amusement of those who stayed behind in Edinburgh in the belief that it was just the right size. This sometimes leads to the comment that the only sensible reason for leaving Scotland for London was to take up the job of prime minister, a remark that might have been made by Samuel Johnson, had he not been so prejudiced on this particular matter and thought quite the opposite. Pat had been relieved that Bruce had gone to London, and it had not occurred to her that he might return. It did not matter much to her, of course, as she moved in different circles from those frequented by Bruce, and she would not have to mix with him even if he did return. But at the same time she felt slightly unsettled by the possible sighting, especially as the experience made her feel an indefinable excitement, an increase in heart rate, that was not altogether welcome. Was it just the feeling one gets on meeting with an old lover, years afterwards? Try as one might to treat such occasions as ordinary events, there is a thrill which marks them out from the quotidian. And that is what Pat felt now. She completed the rest of the bus journey down to Dundas Street in a thoughtful state. She imagined what she might say if she were to meet him and what he in turn might say to her. Would he have been improved by living in London, or would he have become even worse? It was difficult to tell. There must be those for whom living in London is an enriching experience, and there must be those who are quite unchanged by it. Pat had a feeling that Bruce would not have learned anything, as he had never shown any signs of learning anything when he was in Edinburgh. He would just be Bruce. She got off her bus a few

steps from Matthews gallery. Through the window, she saw Matthew at his desk, immersed in paperwork.

She looked at him fondly from a distance: dear Matthew, she thought; dear Matthew, in your distressed-oatmeal sweater, so ordinary, so safe; fond thoughts, certainly, but unaccompanied by any quickening of the pulse. From Publishers Weekly Smith delivers yet another delightful installment to his Scotland Street series.

This time out, he focuses mostly on the irrepressible Bertie Pollock, a precocious six-year-old whose mummy, Irene, forces him to play a saxophone, converse in Italian, do yoga and see Dr. Hugo Fairbairn, a psychotherapist who looks a lot like Bertie's baby brother, Ulysses. As Bertie struggles to accommodate his nutty mummy and new brother, another crisis explodes for artist Angus Lordie, whose beloved dog, Cyril, has been thrown in the pound for biting someone. Cyril is innocent, and Angus, with Bertie's assistance, sets out to rescue Cyril before he's put down. Subplots abound, and Smith details with dependable whimsical flair the romantic progress of Scotland Street familiars Matthew, Pat and Bruce. Series fans know what to expect, and they get it by the truckload. (Nov.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed

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