



The Boy Who Stole the Leopard's Spots

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A decades-old murder, a strange superstition, an enormous snake, and one giant secret are about to rock the beautiful Belle Vue to its core.

It is a time of great upheaval for the Belgian Congo, and Belle Vue is not safe from the changes. But there are more pressing problems as an unsolved disappearance brings up issues for some of the denizens of the village. Add to that a sudden influx of strangers and a horrible storm that literally divides the village in half, and suddenly danger seems to be everywhere.

The lovely young American missionary Amanda, the police chief Captain Pierre Jardin, the local witch doctor and his wise-woman wife Cripple all become embroiled in the mystery -- as evil omens and strange happenings at every turning suggest that more lives will be lost before the true killer is unmasked.

The Boy Who Stole the Leopard's Spots Details

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Author : Tamar Myers

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From Reader Review The Boy Who Stole the Leopard's Spots for online ebook

Kathleen says

I wanted to like this book more. It had great promise to be a fascinating read. But I felt that it fell flat. The end was really underwhelming.

Christine says

I dabbled in this book which flipped backwards and forwards between African folk lore and real life. I cOuldn't quite get into it!!

Debbie says

These books are not mysteries in the usual sense. Actually they aren't mysteries at all. They are a delightfully humorous and thoughtful take on cultural differences in the Belgian Congo in the late 1950s. Young missionary Amanda Brown loves her employee Cripple, wife of the local unsuccessful witchdoctor, but the two of them seldom see eye to eye. There are also very serious discussions about the place of the colonizers in Africa, the differences between the local Protestants, Catholics, and believers in the African traditions, and anticipation of life under independence.

Vontel says

Decided not to read the book at this time, it's another Mystery grab bag book. I believe I have encountered this book or author before, some time ago, certainly pre GR. I skimmed a bit at the beginning, and read the author's notes at the end. May not get back to this one. Have decided to read Heresy first.

Courtney says

"I usually am a fan of mysteries set in Africa. I love the sense of place and descriptions of the land. However, Tamar Myers was not able to pull me in and keep my attention with this 3rd installment of her Amanda Brown series. I had not read either of the previous 2 books before this one and don't know if that was a disadvantage or not. The biggest thing for me is that there really wasn't much of a mystery, or at least anyone trying to solve a mystery. I also became bored easily with the writing. Maybe this was just a case of the wrong book at the wrong time but I kept waiting for something more to happen and it has not yet. I should say as of writing this I a, about 3/4 of the way through. I'm still debating whether or not to finish. Overall, I have been disappointed with The Boy Who Stole the Leopard's Spots. If I find the last 1/4 of the book changes my opinion drastically I will be sure to update this review. I would have just liked to have been grabbed by this point."

Lexy says

This book is part of a trilogy, a fact which is not at all obvious when you read the blurb. The author made many veiled references to prior events which must have happened in the past books but since I haven't read them, I had no idea what she was talking about. The author's writing style didn't sit well with me - I felt like she was simply telling me things instead of showing me. The characters were very one dimensional, with no development over the course of the novel, and the storyline failed to keep my attention. What seemed like a very promising novel turned out to be quite an underwhelming read.

Mindy Danylak says

Folksy, fire-side story-telling writing style; vivid descriptions; humorous inter-personal exchanges; interesting exploration of cross-cultural engagement. This book didn't blow me away but I enjoyed reading it. My favorite part: that Cripple speaks Latin! And the author's notes at the end -- she talks about her childhood, growing up as the child of Mennonite missionaries in the Belgian Congo where and her father was offered a drum made with a skin that included a belly button!

Cathy Cole says

First Line: It was much cooler in the canyon that lay in front of, and below, the village.

Legends surround the birth of twins to a king in the Belgian Congo of the 1920s. This was the time when headhunters and cannibals still followed the old ways, a time when the birth of twins was a bad omen that must be dealt with swiftly. Due to his cunning, the king's twins both survived and grew to manhood.

Fast forward to the late 1950s. As independence for the Congo grows nearer, even the remote town of Belle Vue becomes acquainted with the stirrings of upheaval. Self-professed spiritual leaders travel through almost daily, speaking to large groups of natives, telling them of the delights to come-- to when they will inherit all the goods of the whites and all their knowledge of how to operate the technology. Some whites are nervous, others-- like Madame Cabochon-- who were born in the Congo and have lived there all their lives, seem willing to fight for their rights to remain in their homeland.

Into this unsettled time for Belle Vue arrive some strangers, a huge snake, and a horrendous storm that literally divides the town in half. As one person, then another, dies, it becomes obvious to readers that someone is willing to kill as many times as it takes for a secret to remain buried.

Tamar Myers' parents were missionaries; she grew up in the Belgian Congo. Her young American missionary, Amanda Brown, shows readers how difficult it could be to get used to the climate, the people, and the customs. In this book, Amanda has definitely become romantically involved with the police chief, Captain Pierre Jardin, and the natives who work for her-- Cripple and Protruding Navel-- are up to their usual tricks. Amanda is learning the language, she's learning the customs, and she feels as though she's becoming friends with Cripple, although there's still a lot she must learn from the wise little woman with the twisted back.

If you're looking for a traditional whodunit where the characters are actively out and about searching for clues, you're not going to find it here. The mystery, the clues, the resolution, all unfold gradually, naturally. Everything has been woven into this colorful fabric of story, and if one thread is pulled loose from the rest, the entire book suffers. Myers is skillful at her honest portrayal of the Congo during that era without becoming overly graphic, but it's the character of Cripple who shines brightest over this entire series of books.

If you've read all of Alexander McCall Smith's No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency books, and are looking for something in the same vein, try Tamar Myers' books set in the Congo (The Witch Doctor's Wife, The Headhunter's Daughter, The Boy Who Stole the Leopard's Spots). I wouldn't be at all surprised if-- like me-- you prefer reading about Amanda Brown and Cripple!

Megan says

This is another "new-to-me" author and book I was introduced to courtesy of this year's Malice Domestic conference. While this was the third book in the "Amanda Brown" series, I didn't feel like I needed to have read the first two to enjoy this book. The story takes place primarily in 1958 in the Belgian Congo, shortly before independence, but also includes chapters that flashback to 1935. Past events eventually meet up with the present and it becomes clear why the book began the way it did. What I enjoyed most about this book was the historical setting and the details about life in the Belgian Congo for the Africans, Europeans, and Americans living there that the author included. I felt that she did an excellent job of conveying a sense a time and place, which made the story and characters come alive for me. While this book is called a mystery, I felt like it was more of an historical fiction story with a mystery aspect than a traditional whodunnit. Part of the reason may have been because I'd recently watched an episode of Anthony Bourdain's "Parts Unknown" that was set in Congo. Having the images fresh in my mind added to the reading experience and gave me a different perspective on the Belgian characters in particular.

See Ting says

Excellent book, easy to read and interesting setting and insights into cannibalism!

Leslie says

Kind of glad to be done with this series. I enjoyed the characters but this sequel had too many holes in the plot and some of it just didn't make any sense to me.

Tammy says

Amanda Brown has adjusted to her life as a missionary in the Belgian Congo when a decades old secret invades the peaceful town of Belle Vue. Ancient superstitions and the day of independence from Belgium add to the social upheaval for all who live there. Can Amanda and her assistant, Cripple figure out what is just a bad omen and what links back to an old murder before more lives are lost?

Zack says

<http://www.examiner.com/review/book-r...>

Kelly Knapp says

First, I must say that this book has it all: mystery, budding romance, familial and societal conflict, myths of some of the African tribes, evangelism, hypocrisy, suicide, and even a resurrection.

However, this is neither a book about religion nor evangelism. It is a historical fiction relating a story about a set of twins (an unwanted, evil abnormality in early African tribes) whose father loves them so much he defies the tradition of his people and refuses to let them be killed.

It is a story about a people in subjugation, who are beginning to strain at their chains. And, it is a story of personal foibles that when kept hidden, can eat away at and even destroy lives.

The cannibalistic Bupende tribe, as well as many other African tribes, believes that animals give birth in multiples. However, women give birth to single, individual babies. Therefore, the rare occurrence of twins can only be evil and they are killed. Then, the chief's wife (his favorite one, he has many) gives birth to twins and he concocts a story about a great spirit living in one of the boys, who help to save the town from a leopard. Since they are too young to determine which is this great spirit, they cannot be touched until they mature and can tell the tribe which one is the great one. The tribe gives in and the boys are allowed to live. This part of the story is written as a prologue.

As the author begins her story, it is several years later and the boys are now pre-adolescents. There is another break with tribal traditions when the twins are allowed to participate in a restoration ceremony, the eating-of-flesh. They are allowed because the human that is killed and cooked wronged one of the twins and this is the way to restore his honor. There were two men together when the incident took place, but only one of the men actually wronged the child.

Because the second man shows great courage, he is released and allowed to return to his home. From here, the book begins a complex multiple plot design, flashing forward to 1958 and back to events beginning with the restoration ceremony in 1935.

Because I know little of African history or myths, I cannot comment as to the veracity of the background events in the story. However, it is clear that Ms. Meyers went to great lengths to incorporate real events with the fictional side. Perhaps more important is that Ms. Meyers characters are phenomenal. No two dimensional characters in this story and certainly no stereotypes.

In fact, Ms. Meyers is forever surprising the reader with the depth and intelligence of her characters. Not because the reader has a chance to stereotype a character, but because the characters themselves lead the reader down one path only to backtrack or twist off in an unseen or unexpected direction. In addition, the author has created multiple protagonists, who begin interacting among one another and eliciting bits and pieces of the background of other characters. Many of these bits and pieces are erroneous or become miniature red herrings to the overall story, but create intriguing side stories that lend a deeper insight into many characters.

The setting is integral to the story line. In the 1958 setting, the reader is taken to a river with an island in the middle. The location is called, Belle Vue. The colonialists live on the river's edge and the African natives live on the island. It is during the season just before the rains begin and the humidity climbs higher every day. The colonialists call it the suicide month because the weather can become so oppressive that people will take their own lives to escape it. In 1935, the setting is one in the Bupende tribe's village and as time progresses, other villages until all of our essential characters are in the same village of Belle Vue.

While it could be said that there are many themes throughout the book, the over-riding theme is loyalty and how it is or can be changed by events over time. The readers are submerged in loyalty to families, loyalty to companies, loyalty to oneself, and loyalty to one's god. The author shows the reader, rather than tells the reader, how these loyalties intersect, conflict with one another, and how one loyalty may win out above another.

If I have any complaints about the book, it is the style chosen by the author. While the flashback and forward provides much of the information needed to understand the events in 1958, I found the information provided in the flashbacks to be too vague at times to be satisfying. I do not mind having to ferret out information, but at times I wasn't entirely sure that we were even discussing the same characters anymore. I found myself having to reread sections (usually the flashbacks) to ensure that I had not missed something.

I would recommend this book to history buffs, African literature buffs, and high school students learning about colonialism or slavery and segregation. (It wasn't just an American problem.)

Judie says

Tamar Myers spent her childhood in what was then The Belgian Congo where her parents were missionaries.

THE BOY WHO STOLE THE LEOPARD'S SPOTS, the third of a series of novels based on her experiences there, takes the reader into a small village in 1958 with some flashbacks to 1935.

When she is 40 years old, the tribal chief's favorite wife gives birth to twin sons. They are her first children but the birth of twins is considered unnatural by the tribesman. They believe that one of the babies is an evil spirit and since they don't know which one, both are usually left to die. The chief does some manipulation to allow both boys to survive. One is taken captive and made into a slave in another country several years later.

Much of the story is based on religion. The Catholics don't like the Protestants. The Protestants don't like the Catholics. Neither group likes the "heathens" and the "heathens" find fault with the Christians.

Ms. Myers treats the African people with great love and respect, something most of the other caucasians in the book do not do. Her helper, Cripple, can speak several languages even though she is uneducated. She explains the reasons for cannibalism (to absorb a desired trait from an enemy (e.g., speed from a leg, strength from an arm, wisdom from a brain) and that it wasn't practiced meaninglessly. To their mind, it didn't differ from taking communion in a Catholic Mass when the people are told they are eating the flesh of Jesus.

The story is basically about the lives of the people of the town one very hot month in the summer of 1958 with an unsolved decades old-murder thrown into the mix.

The book mixes sociology with a generous dose of humor. Like the two previous ones in the series, as well

as her previous light mysteries, it is a good read.
