We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week: author Alexander McCall Smith

The prized possession you value above all others... My 34ft sailing boat called Puffin. I sail around the Outer Hebrides in summer wearing a white naval cap.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Discovering Australia so late in life. I first went in my mid-fourties. I'm 66 now and I'd like to have spent longer there. I love its landscape and its people.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Bacon. I have some once a week, but I shouldn't. We're told every slice takes days off your life.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... WH Auden's Collected Shorter Poems, which introduced me to his work in my mid-20s. I went to a reading by him and his flies were undone. There was a gasp as he stood up.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I hate piped music in restaurants, so I'd pull the plug on this painful stuff.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Do what you want to do, rather than what others expect you to.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Morris dancing! I went to Oxford with my wife, Elizabeth, on May Day this year to watch the Morris dancers. It's so English and pagan.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To play a musical instrument well. I play the baritone saxophone badly in an amateur orchestra called The Really Terrible Orchestra!

The film you can watch time and time again... The Cruel Sea because I love the heroism of the sailors. There's a marvellous scene where they eat sausages and Stanley Baker says, 'Snorkers, good-oh!'

The order of service at your funeral... The music in restaurants, so I'd pull the plug on this painful stuff.

The song that means most to you... Fan Tutte always makes me weep.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd blow up wind farms. They're inefficient and wreck our landscape.

The event that altered the course of your life... Leaving Botswana in 1981 after spending a year there teaching. I felt a great sense of sadness because I knew I'd never live there again.

The saddest time that shook your world... Leaving Botswana in 1981 after spending a year there teaching. I felt a great sense of sadness because I knew I'd never live there again.

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