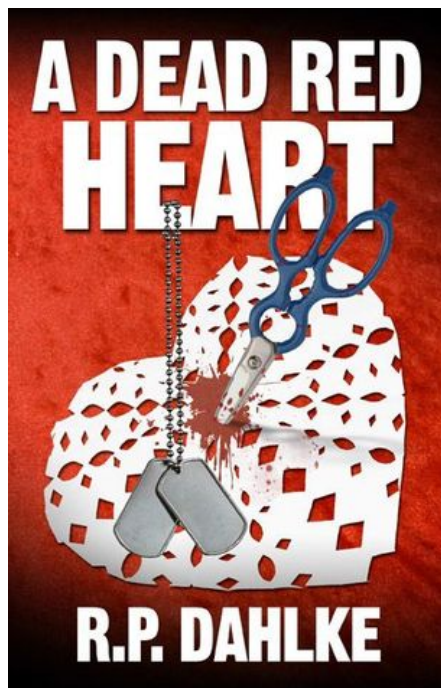




A Dead Red Heart

R.P. Dahlke

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A Dead Red Heart

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A Dead Red Heart R.P. Dahlke

What would you do if the love of your life lost their chance at a heart transplant because the donor organ went to a convicted felon? Grieve and let go--or wait until the convict is released and then hunt him down and make him pay?

Lalla Bains certainly doesn't need any more distractions during the simmering summers in the San Joaquin Valley of California; her tight-wad, widowed father is now a born-again lady's man, a disreputable crop-dusting competitor threatens her business, and last but not least, she worries whether the sultry redhead in the local police department is taking more than a professional interest in her honey, Sheriff Caleb Stone. But when a homeless vet is stabbed and dies at her feet, Lalla Bains, being the exasperating, pushy, tenacious gal she is, Lalla believes the dead man deserves a better homicide investigation than what he's getting.

A Dead Red Heart Details

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Author : R.P. Dahlke

Format : Kindle Edition 302 pages

Genre : Mystery, Fiction

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From Reader Review A Dead Red Heart for online ebook

Ines says

Lalla Bains is still working for her father as a crop duster and her main worry is a homeless veteran, Billy Wayne, who showered her loved red Cadillac with paper snowflakes. When Lalla tries to talk Billy into his senses, she finds him just in time to listen to his final words: "The more there is, the less you see". Armed with that strange clue and a couple of snooping friends, Lalla tries to find Billy's murderer while trying to ignore a special proposal from Sheriff Caleb - her boyfriend.

This mystery doesn't have as many twists and turns as the first book of the series, A Dead Red Cadillac, but I found myself suspecting of almost every character and feeling that Lalla was in danger at whatever she did. The suspense definitely worked for me! I empathise a lot with Lalla, but my favourite character in this book was Lalla's father: Noah Bains. Noah and Lalla dialogues are quite funny and surprising, not the usual father/daughter thing, though they obviously care for each other. He is a little crazy and I couldn't help but laugh while imagining a 68 year-old man wearing a lime green zoot-suit! He's quite the character and tries to give good advice to Lalla while driving her - and every widow on the block - nuts. Filled with a lot of funny, strange and very dark characters, this is another great Lalla Bains book!

Carolyn Rose says

Her impatience and impetuous nature continue to get Lalla Bains into deep trouble when the police investigate her propensity to be too close to the scene of the crime. A fast, fun read.

Mare says

When she finds Billy Wayne Dobson dead outside of Mr. Kim's Chinese restaurant, Lalla Bains' life begins a strange and dangerous side trip. A former model turned crop duster, she takes what life throws at her in stride if not always gracefully.

The characters in this book are strongly defined and very, very memorable. Lalla makes tough decisions, sometimes risking the goodwill of important people in her life, but she does what she feels is the right thing to do and garners full respect for her convictions.

The Modesto, CA setting is so well described that a fan and a cool drink is almost a requirement while reading this smoothly written mystery. When the ending arrives, you know that you've been on a wild ride with a spirited and feisty woman.

I recommend this book for anyone looking for a bit of grit with their mystery.

Marilou George says

Lalla Bains is an ex-model who has moved back home to Modesto, California to run her father's crop dusting business and trouble seems to follow her every move. She is a very strong willed, self-sufficient, head strong

and curious woman. It is her curiosity and sense of justice that ultimately involve her in a murder investigation where she is a suspect.

A Dead Red Heart is written from the point of view of the main character Lalla. R.P. Dahlke takes us on a roller-coaster ride of emotions, action and suspense as the mystery plays out. The drama and suspense are intense, action packed and even humorous. The writing style will keep you totally involved and on the edge of your seat until the final page is read.

Each supporting character in this story I found to be extremely well defined, memorable and held a specific importance to the story. As each character is introduced the plot thickens and becomes more substantial. Even the victim Billy Wayne plays a large role in the story as we come to learn more about him and his struggles. You will find yourself developing a fondness for some of the characters in this book and be disgusted with others. All the characters are an integral part of the story and have very distinct characteristics.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book and would recommend it to all readers who like a book that is entertaining, suspenseful, totally unexpected and has a love story mingled in with it.

Cheryl Rhodes says

A homeless man dies at Lalla's feet in an alley after he's been warned to stop leaving cut out snowflakes/love letters attached to her car.

The man's mother points her finger at Lalla as the murderess. The dead man's aunt wants to talk to Lalla but goes missing. And a newsman whose body is found in the trunk of Lalla's Cadillac is linked to all of them. Is anything what it seems?

I like this series and the author has a wonderful story telling ability. This novel was fast moving and although lots of suspicion was cast over the supporting players I had guessed whodunit quite early on, but I was never 100% sure until the end.

This novel has a few editing problems. Looks like an editor was changing sentences around and forgot to go back and delete extra words. Missing or odd punctuation and quotation marks. I was confused at one point over who was talking. Mostly because the respondent's sentence was tagged into Lalla's paragraph. A lot of little things that distract a reader from an otherwise good story and slows down the reading trying to figure out what just happened here.

For me the most annoying thing about this story was the random use of French words. These people are in California not Quebec and one of them is occasionally speaking in French when neither of the woman are known to have grown up in a bilingual family, studied French together, or have a French connection. I grew up in a bilingual household and studied French in school and university and I never use French unless everyone in the room speaks it or myself or someone else is providing a translation otherwise its just rude. That's how I was brought up and how I felt when I read those passages minus a translation for those who might not understand this foreign language. There didn't seem to be any point to the one character who was speaking French and didn't add anything to the storyline. Typos in French too. Caught me by surprise but the author got it right a little later in the book. Just one of these things that kept me questioning why, why, why and disrupted an otherwise good read.

Well written, not well edited, interesting characters, good dialogue, and a fast moving story that made me

want to keep turning the pages. A good, fun read.

Sheila says

Second in a series, R.P. Dahlke's *Dead Red Heart* stars 40-year-old crop duster and amateur sleuth Lalla Bains as she unravels the mysteries of her heart and of her erstwhile stalker's death. Maybe she's a suspect. And maybe old school friends are trying to scare her off from learning something else. But Lalla Bains doesn't react well to threats of any kind—not even threats of marriage.

The Modesto California scene is convincingly described—I can feel the warmth, hear the airplane overhead, smell the dust in the air. I can hear the characters' voices too, from psychologist-turned-waitress to model-turned-pilot to Vietnam vet now living on the streets. There's real family drama fuelled with real life adding depth and feeling to the tale. And, of course, there's that murder to be solved.

A gentle romantic tension is nicely balanced with stubborn independence and sheer determination as the story unfolds. Foolish risks are plausibly undertaken. Danger is real. And the resolution, while maybe not convincing in retrospect, works perfectly when it arrives.

I'm tempted to go and find book one now. Even more, I'll be looking out for book three. These characters and this place have the staying power to fuel many more tales.

Disclosure: I received a free ecopy of this book from World Literary Café in exchange for my honest review.

Laurie says

This was a funny, well-constructed little mystery that I enjoyed though sometimes I groaned at some of the stunts Lalla pulled, and got frustrated with the way she treated Caleb. Her hot and cold treatment of him and his acceptance of her behavior just did not always sit well with me. But, as the book progressed and more is divulged about her upbringing, it becomes easier to understand why she is burdened with some of the issues she has.

I loved the voice of this story – engaging, breezy and not real subtle. This is the 2nd book in the series, but I enjoyed it perfectly well even though I haven't yet had the opportunity to read *The Dead, Red Cadillac*. Ms. Dahlke knows how to breathe life and vibrancy into her characters. The Combination of a heroine who has a mile-wide stubborn streak with an interesting setting, unusual circumstances, and small-town dynamics makes a finished story concoction that is almost impossible to put down.

Patricia says

Lalla Bains is an ex-model and Aero Ag pilot and a wonderful character that I am looking forward to getting to know better. After giving up her modeling career as well as giving up a couple of husbands, Lalla is back in Modesto, California.

Lalla's father is in bad health and so is his crop dusting business. Crop dusting does not sound like a very complicated business but I soon found out that it is a very complicated business particularly when someone is sabotaging your company.

Sheriff Caleb Stone is the main man in Lalla's life but when Billy Wayne Dobson, a man who is self-medicating his post-traumatic stress disorder, begins to stalk Lalla, she decides to take matters into her own hands rather than allow Caleb to handle the problem. Caleb is talking restraining order and Lalla just can't bring herself to allow the restraining order to be issued. Billy Wayne is shy and easily startled and Lalla feels that she is better equipped to deal with Billy Wayne.

Mr. Kim's Chinese restaurant is where Lalla locates Billy Wayne who appears to be in a drunken stupor. When Lalla tries to wake Billy up he rolls over and she sees the blood stains spreading across his shirt. Billy Wayne manages to give Lalla a cryptic message just before he dies.

The author introduces the reader to a number of characters that make this book a great read. Rather than trust Sheriff Stone and his staff to find the murderer Lalla begins her own investigation into Billy Wayne's death as well the problems behind her father's crop dusting business and generally gets herself in a ton of trouble.

If Lalla pulls into your town in her vintage cherry red Cadillac, get ready for a lot of excitement. This is the second book in the series but it is not necessary to read the books in order. I look forward to reading more books by R. P. Dahlke.

Judie says

Lalla Bains, a forty-year-old, twice divorced, ex-model, has been the unwilling recipient of attention and love letters from Billy Wayne. The day after he covers her car with poems on paper snowflakes, he is stabbed to death. With his final breath he tells her, "The more there is the less you see." Even though he exasperated her, she thinks his death deserves more investigation than it is receiving. So she begins her own investigation even while working with the problems of the aero-ag business run by her and her father. Also involved is her friend and maybe fiancé Sheriff Caleb Stone.

While she does use words originally at times—"His eyes left wet slug trails on my skin until I folded my arms over my breasts and broke the connection"—I found the book full of clichés and repetitions. The terms "took off," "banked over" and "aimed for" were all used in one sentence. In another she writes, "The wind had scoured the evening of its usual dust and debris, and now stars were punching holes in the velvety black dome over my head." We hear about her age, divorce record, and former career several times.

The book has poor grammar ("alright," "us girls have to stick together" "Go slow.").

The men, on the whole, are obnoxious sexist pigs. Her actions don't always make sense: A pen and paper drop to the floor of the car while she is driving so, instead of waiting until she stops, she reaches over, several times, to pick them up. Naturally, she loses control of the car and has an accident. Her car insurance had expired so she was driving illegally.

A French phrase used a couple times is misspelled, differently each time. There is an unexplained and quick transition from talking to her father at home and talking to a group of first graders.

Even though she has known Caleb forever, she doesn't trust him entirely when it comes to exchanging information.

One conversation talks about the danger of using meth. It has good information but seems to have been thrown in just for that reason, not to advance the plot.

She never does explain Billy Wayne's final words though they are mentioned frequently.

I think some good rewriting and editing could have raised the level of this book to four stars.

This was a free Amazon download.

Ally says

(Review by Jon C. Oliver, for Word Vagabond: Supporting Independent and Small Press Authors)

When homeless former Marine Billy Wayne Dobson dies in Lalla Bains' arms in an alley next to Kim's Chinese Restaurant, the only clue to who stabbed him in the heart with a pair of scissors is a cryptic last utterance from Billy Wayne: "The more there is the less you see." As Billy Wayne dies, Lalla senses something in the alley with her. And Mr. Kim, trying to comfort Lalla with a cup of tea, tells her she is "too close to ghost."

A homeless former crop dusting pilot whom Lalla fired offers the information that the killer is a cop, but won't give up the name—if he actually knows it—before he is killed by a semi when he runs into the street trying to get away from Lalla, who is chasing him to get him to give up the name.

With the help of a newspaper reporter, Del Potts, and a TV reporter, Jan Bidwell, Lalla solves the murder. In the process: Del is almost killed when he is locked in the trunk of Lalla's vintage red Cadillac, Lalla and her father are threatened, Lalla has a scary incident in a crop duster, Mr. Kim's daughter is murdered, and several interesting relationships and an imposter are revealed.

The book is filled with many interesting characters, with Eula Mae Bains arguably the most interesting. Named after her great-aunt, she is known to everyone except Detective Gayle Rodney as Lalla—a name bequeathed to her by her dead brother. To Detective Gayle Rodney she is "Miz Eula Mae Bains"—usually uttered scornfully.

Up until four years ago Lalla was a runway model in New York City. Then her widowed father, who needed a triple bypass and figured the end was near, asked her to help out for a "few days" in getting his effects in order. So Lalla left New York, a faltering modeling career and a bad divorce from a Puerto Rican baseball player with a wandering eye, and returned to Modesto, California. Her father now seems to be on the mend and Lalla has stayed to help with the family crop dusting business.

Many of the characters in this story are former classmates of Lalla's, including her "sweetie" Caleb Stone, the Sheriff and former military MP. He is probably the only stable character in her life right now. In not any particular order, rounding out the interesting characters, are: sleazy detective Gayle Rodney; conniving reporter Del Potts; loose and flirty TV reporter Jan Bidwell; sympathetic diner operator Roxanne; and attractive, new, and young, police officer Pippa Roulette—not who we originally think she is; and homeless former Marine—and dead, Billy Wayne Dobson. There are other, lesser characters that show up at times to move the story along and make it interesting.

The story progresses very nicely and the author does a good job of bringing the reader up to speed on characters that have appeared in previous Lalla Bains books. It took me no time at all to be familiar with the relationships among Lalla, Det. Rodney and Sheriff Stone.

While the reader may have suspicions of who is responsible for the murder of Billy Wayne, the author keeps us guessing with enough red herrings to obscure the truth until late in the book.

With clear exposition and descriptions as well as an intriguing tale, the author kept me interested throughout. I will be reading more by this author.

Vanya D. says

I received this book to review from the World Literary Cafe (WLC). I requested it with the hope that it will be a quick read, and indeed it was.

I noticed that the writing needs some mild editing, as in, there are words repeated twice like "this this", and it wasn't a single case scenario.

The story was entertaining and engaged my attention almost the entire time. It had a nice mystery that wound through the pages. There was also a sweet romance which at times felt a little forced.

I give the book 3 stars, because I don't really agree with the reality of it. I mean, we're talking about a 40-year old ex-model who suddenly turns private investigator and is damn good at it with no experience behind her back? Seriously? That's not only incredible - it's impossible. I know that there are many books like that, where the main investigator isn't really a police officer, but they always, ALWAYS have a real officer/retired cop/real private investigator behind their back to feed them info and help with the clues. Not here. In "A dead red heart" Lalla is the only one with brains and a thought process. Okay, sure I give it that Dal was a journalist who was helping her. But my point still stands.

I think that even though this is a work of fiction, there must be some realistic boundary in it. After all it's in the contemporary genre, not the paranormal or urban fantasy where all sorts of things are possible. Here we're talking about normal people with no special powers.

I don't agree with the author on her portrayal of the cops either. Sure, some cops really are lazy asses and all, but how come not even one of them had brains? Why did all their information come from Lalla, the ex-model? She fed them clues that she stumbled upon and she figured out and they never got to think at all? That's lame, and smells of prejudice against the law enforcement.

Also, I think that Lalla should've been scared at least a little bit. But no. She was real steel. She only got a bit shaken when she got the threat note and the dead rat (ewwwwwwww!!!) but that's about it. If it were me (or any other woman in her right mind) I would've freaked out!! Instead, what did Lalla do? She got into the mess even deeper.

Her relationship with Caleb, like I said, felt a little forced. He wanted her, she wasn't sure half the time. He ran after her, called her, wanted to live with her and marry her. And Lalla was just so whiny! She hurt him without thinking twice about it, then he kept running back to her! It was kind of annoying too.

The characters were well developed in their unrealistic situations. The one person I liked the most was Lalla's father. He was funny and sounded real.

Martha Bryce says

A Dead Red Heart by RP Dahlke

***** of *****

What an absolutely delightful novel this was. A Dead Red Heart is one of the books about the adventures

of Eula Mae Bains, known to her family and friends as Lalla. A towering goddess of a woman, the former high profile model is now forty (oh dear Lord- forty!) and has settled in back home in Modesto, CA, running her father's crop dusting business and working as one of the pilots. As the story opens, Lalla is in an alley, getting ready to give former Marine and now street person Billy Wayne a "Come To Jesus" lecture about the hundreds of love poems on cut out snow flakes that he left attached to her already highly visible vintage red Caddilac. When Lalla starts her tirade in the alley behind Mr. Kim's Vietnamese restaurant, Billy Wayne is not really responsive to her verbal onslaught. That's probably due to the scissors that are sticking out of his chest and the massive amount of blood hemorrhaging from the wound. Before she knows it, she's a suspect in his murder, even though her boyfriend, Caleb is a deputy with the police department.

Lalla is not a wallflower who will sit idly waiting for the police to clear her name, especially since her reputation is a bit tarnished by a different murder and arson that kind of fell into her path a year ago. Along with an extremely amusing cast of friends, associates and the usual suspects, Lalla works to solve her problem while being harassed by an anonymous hater, mooned over by an underaged college boy, irritated by her father who starts to date her third grade teacher, and positioned to take the fall for a few other crimes.

The Dead Red Heart is more typical of a Southern girl's whodunit, even though it's set in CA. Even the secondary characters in this novel are lively, eccentric and very well developed. The plot moves at a brisk pace and even if you can figure out the denouement before the end, you'll want to keep reading, just for the pleasure of spending a little more time with Lalla and her cast of characters. How many others will die before she is exonerated? Will she accept Caleb's proposal despite her two amusingly failed previous marriages?

Jump into that vintage cherry red Cadillac with Lalla Bains and enjoy the ride as the mystery of A Dead Red Heart runs its course. Like me, you'll want more from this new found friend.

Elizabeth says

This was a delightful mystery! I loved each and every minute of reading. The relationship between Lalla and Caleb is full of funny and touching moments, the plot just keeps getting more interesting the more you read. I have to check to see if there's another one soon.

Gerrie Finger says

A Dead Red Heart

By R. P. Dahlke

I'm a sucker for places I've never been and I'm overjoyed when I come across a setting/location that puts me there as R. P. Dahlke does with Modesto, Calif.

Also I love a kick-butt heroine with a sense of humor and a good heart. Lalla Bains is all that and more. A former model turned crop-duster pilot (sounds weird, but good writing and plotting makes it plausible) Sheriff Caleb Stone is her long-time boyfriend. Their interactions are funny, aggravating or heart-rending. Lalla's family owns the crop dusting business. Another memorable character is her dad who fights against odds to keep the company going when there are those who'd like to see it go under. If it kills her, Lalla, a woman addicted to danger, won't let them have their way.

The heart of the mystery is Billy Wayne Dobson. He's obsessed with Lalla. Caleb warns him to stay away from her. But his obsession is too great. Lalla goes to confront him and finds him dying, having been stabbed with scissors. He gasps out some last words. Naturally, feisty Lalla is suspect number one. She determines to find out who killed Billy and why. Take a look at this exchange:

He (Caleb) gave me a piercing look. "Yeah, you. You got that race-horse out-of-the-gate look all over your face."

"If you will remember, I'm the one who found Billy Wayne, and there are people who expect me to find his killer, namely Detective Rodney."

"You got something in mind? Never mind. If I don't know, I can't get in trouble." At my surprised look, he said, "You love this stuff, don't you?"

Flustered, I sputtered, "Caleb Stone, that's not fair! What am I supposed to do? He died at my feet and my reputation stays in purgatory until the guilty party is in jail."

"Deny it all you want, but I know you, you got the bit in your mouth and the chase is on for you, isn't it?"

I could feel a flush rising up my cheeks. He was right, of course. His words had touched something deep within me and it sounded very much like a starting gun and whinnying race horses. I never felt more alive than when I was this close to touching danger.

"Look," he said, "you've gotten more in one day than we have all week. It's not a blank check, so don't go overboard and do anything rash; no flashing your fake badge at people."

"But, Caleb...", I could do without the badge, but it felt good to banter with him again.

"No buts on this."

R.P. Dahlke (2011-06-05T21:26:50.694000+00:00). A Dead Red Heart (Kindle Locations 1900-1912). Dead Bear Publishing. Kindle Edition.

Book Him Danno says

A murder mystery with just enough red herring to keep even the most avid amateur sluth on their toes. I enjoyed this book, second in the series, and look forward to reading the third book.

I have rated this book four stars.

I obtained this book from Amazon in Kindle format.
