



## **The Red Dahlia**

*Lynda La Plante*

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Detective Anna Travis is working on a murder case that has created a media frenzy. The victim, Louise Pennel, a 24-year-old girl, was last seen in a London night club. Her body was found dumped by the River Thames. Anna must summon all her strength and guile to hunt down this sadistic killer.

## **The Red Dahlia Details**

Date : Published October 2nd 2006 by Simon & Schuster (first published 2006)

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Author : Lynda La Plante

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## **From Reader Review The Red Dahlia for online ebook**

### **Shaun says**

What can I say...this is "my kind of book." Love the characters and the meticulous plotting. I am also a sucker for the kind of sexual tension La Plante builds between Anna Travis and her superior James Langton.

Not for the faint of heart as La Plante does not hesitate to describe the darker side of humanity. That said, the violence/descriptions never feel gratuitous.

The fact that I ordered this on my kindle rather than wait to have it sent from another library, not to mention that I already have the next three books in the series physically in my to -read pile and ready to go speaks volumes about my enthusiasm for the book and the series as a whole.

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### **Gerry says**

A young girl's body is found dismembered close by the Thames at Richmond and the killing mirrored an unsolved 1940s Los Angeles murder that came to be known as The Black Dahlia.

The similarities in the killing and the fact that the young lady by the Thames had a red flower in her hair earned this new case the sobriquet of 'The Red Dahlia'.

Newly promoted Detective Inspector Anna Travis is on the case but she meets with little success and eventually is joined by a former paramour, Detective Chief Inspector James Langton.

Still there are no clues to who the killer is despite extensive police work. Then a break through, just as the media were beginning to lose patience with the police.

This leads to the uncovering of some bizarre practices within one particular family but even so there are no definite clues as to who the murderer is.

However, good work by Travis and Langton, not really hindered by their smoldering passion for one another, eventually leads to the murdered being uncovered.

A real page-turner that has the reader on the edge of the seat from beginning to end.

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### **Patricia says**

Danny Fowler, a paperboy, was winding up his route and heading home from breakfast when he spotted what appeared to be a blow-up doll on the bank of the river. What Danny found wasn't a blow-up doll and he no longer had an appetite for breakfast. His discovery began the investigation into a death that became known as The Red Dahlia murder.

Detective Inspector Anna Travis is a part of the investigation team and soon Detective Chief Inspector James

Langton is called in to head up the investigation. It has been a year since the two worked together. The two had a romantic relationship at that time but Anna broke it off since James wouldn't make a commitment. Anna is nervous about working with him again but the murder takes precedence over everything.

The woman later referred to as the Red Dahlia has been cut in half and her blood drained. Anna makes a connection between this murder and the long unsolved case of The Black Dahlia in California. Soon there are more parallels between the two cases when the killer begins sending communications to the newspapers and the police.

When Travis and Langton finally get an anonymous phone call that leads them down a gruesome path to a killer who is vicious to an extent that cannot even be imagined. The Red Dahlia is a fascinating story that finally results in a satisfying conclusion.

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### **Jann Barber says**

The second book in Lynda La Plante's Anna Travis series is another well-written book. Prior to reading this, I had already watched the BBC episodes. As with "Above Suspicion," the BBC version was faithful to the book. There were extra bits that added to the experience of reading the book, but I was pleased at the way the author's intent was preserved when bringing the story to television.

The books do focus more attention on the relationship, or whatever it might be, that exists between Travis and her superior, Langton. Both are driven by their police work, so it is doubtful that any sort of fulfilling relationship can ever develop. According to the time frame, Travis has been involved in several murder cases since she last worked with Langton.

The murder of Louise Pennel is identical to the murder of Elizabeth Short, known as The Black Dahlia. Travis, Langton, and the rest of the murder squad spend about 31 days trying to discover the identity of the murderer and then find evidence on which to convict him.

I plan to finish the current books in this series, although I believe only three of them have been made into television programs at this point in time.

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### **David Highton says**

A decent police thriller, second in the Travis series

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### **Carol Dumas says**

Probably one of the most gritty and gory police procedural mysteries I've ever read! I think I'll return to my cozier mysteries after this one.

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## **Gary says**

This is the 2nd book in the Anna Travis series by author Lynda La Plante.

Detective Anna Travis is working on a murder case that has created a media frenzy. The victim, Louise Pennel, a 24-year-old girl, was last seen in a London night club. Her body was found dumped by the River Thames. Anna must summon all her strength and guile to hunt down this sadistic killer.

I didn't enjoy this one quite as much as the 1st one in the series but liked the fact that the characters are becoming more well known to me and growing with every chapter. I finished this book and immediately started the 3rd book in the series.

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## **Donna says**

This book was ok, but I felt it was written with an eye to a TV adaptation.

The confession came all of a sudden, in one paragraph the person was refusing to talk, and a couple of paragraphs later the detective was explaining what the person had confessed to him and it seemed like there was a big chunk missing. There were quite a lot of typos throughout the book too, which I find quite irritating.

If you like TV police dramas you will probably like this book, but I don't think I'll read any more La Plante myself.

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## **Alan Annand says**

For years I was a big fan of the British police procedural TV series PRIME SUSPECT (starring Helen Mirren) created by author Lynda LaPlante. This was the first novel I'd read by LaPlante, and I was not disappointed. The plot involves the murder and grisly dismemberment of two British working girls, in a manner that immediately suggests a copycat killing of the infamous Red Dahlia murders in 1947 California. The focal detective Anna Travis and her boss Peter Langton, overcoming some awkwardness due to a failed romantic escapade awhile ago, set their personal issues aside and develop the necessary leads to identify a suspect. The police procedure is impeccable, and the characterization of cops, criminals and witnesses is very deftly handled. The plot moves along in a brisk manner, without hiding the fact that it (realistically) takes roughly 35 days from the discovery of the first victim to the arrest of the psycho perpetrator. As a writer of crime fiction myself, this book was right up my alley -- entertaining and informative at the same time.

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## **Melinda Elizabeth says**

The Red Dahlia is a great read. Lynda La Plante has a unique style in crime fiction, where she is quite mechanical in the descriptions of what's going on. This means that you get to know Anna Travis quite well. You know when she's got ladders in her stockings, what she eats for breakfast, and how long she's had her car for.

It's a bit of an adjustment but once you get into the swing of things, this descriptive process really gives you great insight into what's going on in the book.

The Red Dahlia is a copycat killer who has taken a very famous case, and turned it into his own. No DNA, no witnesses, attempting to unravel this one is going to push Anna to her limits.

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### **A. S. says**

This book had the potential to be interesting, at least in the first 150 pages or so. I was attracted to the grim descriptions of the autopsy reports and at first, the cops' diligence in tracking the killer as well as the copycat description of the crime scene with that of the Black Dahlia murder in the 1940s. After the name of the killer gets revealed, the book goes downhill, and the only thing I looked forward to were the one or two lines dedicated to describing what Anna Travis ate for dinner every "day" (the book is divided into days of investigation rather than chapters). Maybe I'm Hollywood glamorizing detective work, but once I know who the killer is, I want him carted off to jail awaiting trial. I don't want to deal with the complexities of trying to find a piece of evidence that will allow the cops to get a warrant, or eventually, to arrest him.

The book is in serious need of editing. I can't remember the last time I read a mystery novel over 350 pages (and that was Agatha Christie, the only mystery author that I'd allow to get away with something like that). This book is 432 pages long--unacceptable for a genre that's supposed to be quickly paced. The love story in the background also doesn't add a thing to the novel. I haven't read other LaPlante books, so I don't know the background behind Langton and Travis' relationship, but to me he is presented as a rude, aggressive, pushy man with alcoholic tendencies. In short, if he wasn't on the side of the "good guys" I would wonder if he was a baddie. The much more pleasant reporter gets shafted as a baddie because he writes about the case through Travis' notes. Why can't the reporter help uncover some secrets of his own? He's a much nicer character than Langton.

Going back to the point about needing editing, I'm a bit confused about the author herself. Is she English herself? Her backflap bio states that she resides in England, but if that's so, then why does she retain certain American words? She keeps using the word sweater instead of jumper; while I'm American, it seems weird that something written in an Englishwoman's perspective would call it an American term. It's not fanfiction, it's published work, and it must be edited accordingly.

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### **Becca says**

One of my all time favourite books, is Above Suspicion by Lynda La Plante. I read it such a long time ago and I absolutely loved it as soon as I started it. The Red Dahlia is the second book in the Anna Travis series, and I've wanted to read it for ages.

It was everything I hoped it would be. It was fast paced, thrilling, detailed, exciting and suspenseful. I got to the final pages and didn't want it to end – well I kind of did, the baddie needed putting down!

The story is about Anna Travis, a police detective, who gained experience of homicide detection from her first case in Above Suspicion, and now must use that experience to solve a new crime. Somebody is killing women in a gruesome way that mirrors a murder in America over 50 years ago called, by the press, The

Black Dahlia. The new murder victim is given the moniker The Red Dahlia, due to a red flower in her hair. (Clever, these press peeps)!

There is conflict in the department, when Anna's old boss and love interest gets drafted in to head up the team. But Anna soon finds comfort in the form of a reporter who the killer happens to be contacting about his crimes.

Will Anna catch the bad guy? Will her relationship with a reporter hinder the case? Will her relationship with the Guv reignite? Who killed the Red Dahlia??

This was suspense filled and very well paced. For a detective novel with only two murders, one of which has happened before the story starts, it doesn't have any dull moments. We follow Anna and the team as they get clues, interview suspects, gather evidence, and as we go along we feel more excited that we are going finally be able to get this guy. There are frustrating moments where we think he is off the hook, but justice usually prevails in these kind of books.

There is a lot of detail about the evidence gathering and the procedures used. I found this really interesting, some may find this a little repetitive, but I thought it added a narrative to the story. We could see how close, and yet how very far they were from catching this guy.

It is hard to know where to lay your sympathy in this story. There are two sisters, whom we feel very sympathetic for, due to what has happened to them. But they just don't seem to want to help themselves or the police. The son, Edward, is just a bit odd. He has been coerced by his father to do all sorts of things, from a very young age. So I kind of felt conflicted about whether to feel sorry for him or not.

The TV adaptation of the Anna Travis series was fantastic. They ran under the title Above Suspicion and were based very closely on the books. The casting of Kelly Reilly was perfect – she is an excellent Anna Travis. This is one instance where the TV/film is as good as the book.

Thoroughly recommended to all police procedural, crime/thriller fans. Definitely pick up a Lynda La Plante, this is a perfect place to start. Although, be warned, it is VERY graphic in places and quite gruesome! :)

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## **Christina Rothfusz says**

My first book by this author and I enjoyed it.

The Red Dahlia killer copycat's the murders committed in the 1940's in LA. The novel deals not with only finding the killer but in the actual difficulties in finding enough evidence to arrest him.

I did not feel the lover story in the background added anything to the story but did not overly distract from it either.

Although this is the 2nd of the Anna Travis novels, it did not matter overly that I did not read the first one as this novel stood on it's own well.

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## **Ineke van Mackelenbergh says**

My first attempt at a book by Lynda La Plante. The story had all the makings of being an excellent thriller and suspenseful, but to my mind because it is so very detailed became a little long in the tooth, and I came away disappointed. Excellent descriptions of all relevant characters although the "love story" in the 'background' added nothing to the overall story, and I found much of it contrived.

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## **Nancy Oakes says**

The Red Dahlia is second in a series to feature DI Anna Travis, behind Above Suspicion, which I own but haven't yet read, although I don't think I missed anything. This was an outstanding mystery novel...perfect pace, building suspense throughout, characters that seemed real, and a story that kept me reading until I finished the book.

While out delivering the last of his newspapers, a young boy makes a gruesome discovery. The police arrive and discover the body of a young woman, severed in half, bloodless, and with grotesque cuts on either side of her mouth. One of the local newspapers gets an anonymous letter that relates the case to the old unsolved case of the Black Dahlia in Los Angeles, and Anna Travis and her team realize that they have their work cut out for them. Anna's gov, Morgan, is hospitalized, and DCI James Langton, with whom Anna had worked before and with whom she had some history, takes the lead in investigating the case. A profiler brought in to help realizes that the killer is going to strike again if the police do not find him, but the police have their hands full just trying to find out about the victim.

The novel is absolutely a mystery lover's novel. The first half of the book involves the team getting up to speed with the Black Dahlia case and trying to find out as much as they can about the victim, while the second half is all about locating the killer after an anonymous caller reluctantly leaves information about the murder. The mystery is very tightly plotted and the writing is excellent. LaPlante's characterizations are very well drawn, never being dragged down to the level of cardboard cutouts, the action never stops and the payoff is worth the 400+ pages of reading. I can most highly recommend this book -- it is probably one of my favorite mystery reads in a while.

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