



## Bleeding Hearts

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Retired FBI agent Gregor Demarkian becomes involved in an old mystery when the murdered woman's husband, a New Age guru named Paul Hazzard, begins to court an aged widow who lives in a small Armenian American enclave in downtown Philadelphia. Hazzard's three children, the onetime mistress he had tried to blame for his wife's murder, and various friends and neighbors of Demarkian are all involved in the events that follow. Two more murders, both carried out in the same manner as the first, follow before Demarkian, working with the local police, is able to identify the killer.

BLEEDING HEARTS is the eighth in Jane Haddam's fine series featuring Demarkian; all the novels in the series center around a holiday, in this case Valentine's Day. The presumed romance between Hazzard and Hannah Krekorian, the eventual lifting of the depression suffered by the young single mother who provides the block with wild decorations for every holiday, and the slow-moving involvement of Demarkian and his neighbor Bennis Hannaford, as well as the sudden affair between Bennis' visiting brother and a much older widow in the neighborhood, all relate to Valentine's Day.

Demarkian is an interesting character, similar to Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot, Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe, and other portly, older crime solvers but with distinctive qualities of his own. Bennis and Father Tibor, regular characters in the series, are not prominent in this novel, but the Armenian atmosphere is handled with great skill and affection. There is much subtle humor and not very much gore. The solution, reached through Demarkian's deductive powers, is fittingly surprising and satisfying. In all, BLEEDING HEARTS is pleasant light entertainment.

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