



## Louisiana Bigshot: A Talba Wallis Novel

By Julie Smith

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### A Talba Wallis Novel

By night the glamorous Baroness de Pontalba, by day New Orleans' hippest P.I., Talba Wallis is dumbfounded when she can't do a simple background check on an old friend—Babalu Maya just doesn't seem to exist on paper. Four days later, she doesn't exist at all.

As Talba threads her way backward through Babalu's short, difficult life, she finds an intricate pattern of violence and fear, and a shadowy Mr. Big with homicidal intent. Talba butts right into everybody's business in Clayton, Louisiana, a small town with a big, ugly secret, where being black, mouthy, and smart are the three qualities most likely to get her killed. As she uncovers dark truths, events and people spiral into nasty motion in a story that has more twists and turns than the Mississippi River.

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## **Louisiana Bigshot: A Talba Wallis Novel By Julie Smith Bibliography**

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## **Editorial Review**

### Amazon.com Review

Talba Wallis, hip and happening PI, a.k.a. the Baroness Pontalba, star of the New Orleans avant garde, was first introduced in *Louisiana Hotshot* and returns in this deft, well-written mystery about Babalu Maya, a "healer" who wants to know if her boyfriend is cheating on her. Shortly after Talba confirms her client's suspicions, Babalu dies of a heroin overdose the police are certain is a suicide. But both Talba and Jason, Babalu's contrite and confused boyfriend, find it such an improbable scenario that he hires Talba to find out what really happened. Unraveling the mystery takes the sassy sleuth with the attitude that's bigger than she is to the small Louisiana town where Babalu was born and to the prominent, influential family that turned its back on her a long time ago. While the plot isn't much more than a routine Southern gothic, the heroine is: Talba Wallis is a lively, engaging protagonist with family secrets of her own that are revealed in a secondary plot that's much more interesting than the primary one. Smith, the author of three other series, has a real winner in this one. --*Jane Adams*

### From Publishers Weekly

In her second outing (after 2001's well-received *Louisiana Hotshot*) from Edgar-winner Smith, Talba Wallis, whose day job as a newly licensed PI never interferes with her nighttime gig as the performance poet called the Baroness de Pontalba, finds herself entangled in the dirty laundry of white folks' family secrets when she sets out to prove that her friend Babalu's death was murder, not suicide and not a drug overdose. In the end, the snarl of old family skeletons, corrupt politicians and racial ugliness becomes too serpentine for its own good, and the solution to the murder is vaguely unsatisfying. Far more appealing are the strongly drawn characters. The interplay between the young black woman and her much older white boss, a man who admires her brain and her fearlessness but would never let on, is warm and respectful; Smith nicely plays it against the very real and very dangerous racial divide that Talba encounters when she investigates her friend's smalltown past. The fiercely independent Talba still lives with her no-nonsense mama, Miz Clara, who makes the best fried chicken known to man and thinks Talba's way of dressing for poetry readings makes her look like "some fool who's been to one too many rummage sales." But Talba, as her sweet schoolteacher boyfriend never fails to remind her, is every inch a baroness. She's also a fine poet, and one of the delights of the book is that Smith lets us peek inside the mind and heart of a poet at work, revealing the process as well as the result.

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### From Library Journal

In her second adventure after *Louisiana Hotshot*, African American P.I. Talba Wallis, otherwise known in New Orleans poetry circles as the Baroness de Pontalba, keeps tabs on the fiance of her masseuse friend Babalu Maya. She quickly proves his infidelity but cannot understand Babalu's subsequent suspicious suicide-by-overdose. The fiance hires her to investigate, which she does with zeal, wit, and aplomb. Talba finds that beneath Babalu's quirky style, invented name, and upper-crust family lies a history of abuse that may have begun when she was nearly scalped in high school. Unusual subject matter, then, set off by an appealing but streetwise heroine makes this a strongly recommended choice for most mystery collections.

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### **From reader reviews:**

**Susan Burroughs:**

Information is provisions for individuals to get better life, information nowadays can get by anyone with everywhere. The information can be a knowledge or any news even a huge concern. What people must be consider when those information which is from the former life are difficult to be find than now is taking seriously which one would work to believe or which one typically the resource are convinced. If you have the unstable resource then you understand it as your main information you will see huge disadvantage for you. All of those possibilities will not happen within you if you take Louisiana Bigshot: A Talba Wallis Novel as your daily resource information.

**Bethel Stockton:**

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**Michael Cardona:**

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