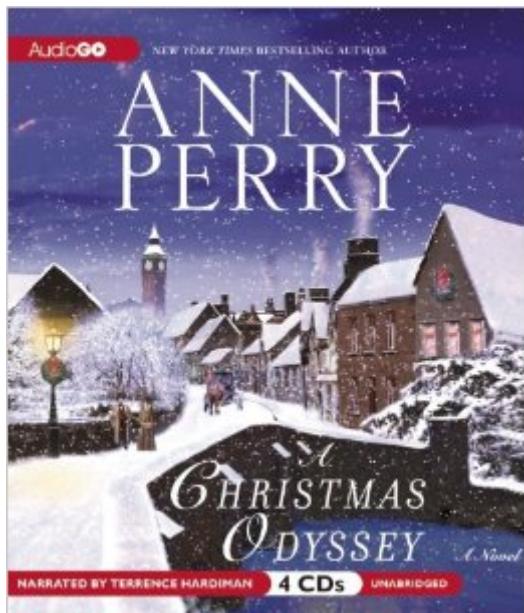


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A Christmas Odyssey



Synopsis

Henry Rathbone is called by an old friend whose son has gone missing just before the Christmas holiday. Now in his early twenties, Lucien has known trouble for some time and has often fallen victim to the vices of drugs, alcohol, and women. His father now fears the worst. Their old friend, Squeaky Robinson, volunteers to help as well. Henry agrees and, joined by Crow, a young doctor at the clinic, the pair trawls the pubs, brothels, and opium dens of the West End in search of clues.

Book Information

Series: Christmas

Audio CD

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Average Customer Review: 3.5 out of 5 starsÂ [See all reviewsÂ \(37 customer reviews\)](#)

Best Sellers Rank: #7,265,552 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #79 inÂ Books > Books on CD > Authors, A-Z > (P) > Perry, Anne #113874 inÂ Books > Mystery, Thriller & Suspense > Thrillers & Suspense > Suspense #156199 inÂ Books > Deals in Books

Customer Reviews

Perry takes an odd assortment of characters through the twisted alleys of London's underworld, where class distinctions are blurred by the smoke of opium pipes and the sale of every kind of depravity known to man. When James Wentworth requests the assistance of his friend, Harry Rathbone, in locating his dissolute son, Lucien, from the sure self-destruction of his vices, it is but ten days until Christmas. A gentleman of some refinement, Rathbone turns to Hester Monk's medical clinic for suggestions on how best to conduct his search. The clinic visit yields the scrappy Squeaky Robinson, a former brothel-keeper, and an enigmatic slum doctor, Crow. The unlikely trio descends into the London's warren of tunnels, a cornucopia of perversions and drugs for anyone with the price of admission. Perry's Victorian London shimmers with Christmas cheer in streets bedecked with sparkling lights, below a bleak network of alleys and tunnels where Lucien is lost among the bodies of those who seek oblivion. Bessie, a teenager familiar with this underground maze, joins the entourage searching for a man who doesn't want to be found. They hear talk of

Sadie, a beautiful woman who sparkles with manic energy, captivating the distracted Lucien; and the Shadow Man, a dark figure who rules a kingdom of vice and addiction, who decides who will enter and who will leave, who is useful and who must die. In this brutal place, Lucien is the quarry, but Rathbone, Squeaky, Crow and Bessie are the prey of a monster who feeds on the confusion of innocents. This is certainly an unusual Christmas mystery, but one that contrasts the two worlds of London society, the fancy homes and joyful celebrations of the wealthy and the damp, hopeless streets where poverty and crime coexist and depravity thrives unchecked.

First Sentence: Henry Rathbone leaned a little farther forward in his armchair and regarded his visitor gravely. Henry Rathbone is asked by a good friend to find his son, Lucian. Lucian has been lost in the world of gambling, drugs and dangerous sex. Although Henry gives his word to find Lucian, this is a world about which Henry has no knowledge. With the help of Squeaky Robinson, former brother-keeper; Crow, an unlicensed doctor who works in the slums, and Bessie, a brave teen who lives on the edges of that dark world, the four set out to fulfill Henry's promise. Anne Perry's Christmas novellas are my annual gift to myself. They allow me to re-visit Victorian England, as she so accurately displays it, visit the secondary characters in her Monk and Pitt series and read a book with a subtle Christmas message that doesn't preach or push. While this year's book may not have ended up being my favorite so far, as it is very dark, it once again demonstrates just what a fine writer is Perry. Perry creates characters about whom you really care and she creates them from all walks of life. She truly demonstrates that it's not one's social or economic status that defines them, but what kind of person they are and the philosophies that define them. Henry talks about friendship and Perry quantifies it in a way we each can understand. She talks, though her characters, about the ingratitude of those who have, and how relevant is that to today, and shares her observations on homeliness, again without preaching. This is not at all a sweet, light Christmas story. Perry takes us from the home of wealth to places no one should ever have to go amongst people no one would ever want to meet. Parts are dark, gritty and vile.

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