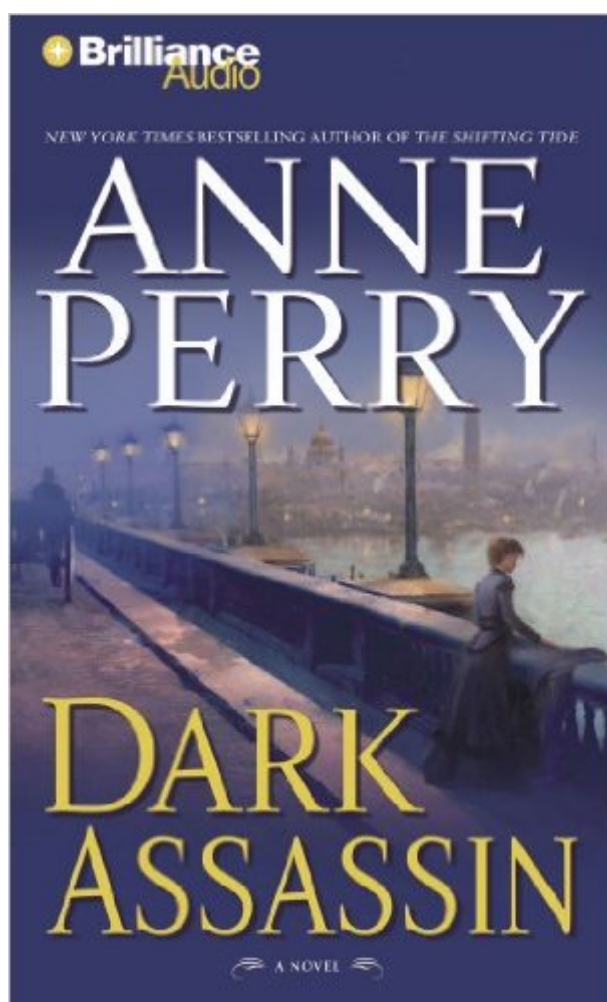


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Dark Assassin (William Monk Series)



Synopsis

A superintendent in the Thames River Police, William Monk is on a patrol boat near Waterloo Bridge when he and his men notice a young couple standing at the bridge railing, apparently engaged in an intense discussion. The woman waves her arms and places her hands on the man's shoulders. A caress or a push? He grasps hold of her. To save her or to kill her? Seconds later, the pair plunges to death in the icy waters. Monk can't help but wonder, has he witnessed an accident, a suicide, or a murder? It seems impossible to determine the truth but, haunted by the woman's somber beauty, he is impelled to try. Mary Havilland is her name and until recently she and Toby Argyll, the fair-haired man who shared her fate, had planned to marry. Her father, an engineer employed by the Argyll Company, has also recently died - a suicide according to the police and Mary's sister. But friends tell Monk that Mary suspected her father had been murdered because of his stubborn insistence that the Argyll Company's current project - participation in the construction of a splendid new sewer system for the metropolis - is so badly flawed that the entire city may be in dire peril from flood and fire. Already struggling to win the respect of his men, Monk is faced with two urgent mysteries. With his intrepid wife, Hester, he is soon treading a slippery path - from luxurious drawing rooms where powerful men hatch their unscrupulous plots to a world beneath the city where poor folk fight starvation. In nightmarish tunnels, Monk and Hester find true friends, among them Scuff, a young mudlark; Sutton, the ratcatcher, and Snoot, Sutton's clever terrier. For once, even Monk's old enemy, Superintendent Runcorn, is on his side. But as rainfall strains the fragile manmade underground, a murderer remains free - and poised to strike again.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It's true that this latest William Monk mystery novel is quite different from the previous ones in that instead of looking at one particular mystery plot from several different angles (one subplot that would've involved Monk's efforts, while another concentrated on Hester's and yet a third involved barrister Oliver Rathbone's contribution to the case), "Dark Assassin" is more of a "one-tone" mystery novel -- one sees things almost exclusively from Monk's point-of-view. William Monk has a new job as a police inspector with the Thames River Police. It is position that he has accepted because of the job security that it offers and because the inspector that he's replacing, the deceased Inspector Durban, had recommended him for the job ("The Shifting Tide"). Monk, however, is finding it heavy going trying to fill the popular Durban's shoes, especially since he feels the guilt of having survived while Durban died, and because he feels as if the other policeman of the Thames River Police not only hold him accountable for having survived, but also question his competence. One evening, while on patrol, Monk and his team witness the questionable plunge onto the Thames by a young couple. Both die from the impact. However it remains unclear as to whether or not it was a suicide pact between the two, if one of them was trying to push the other off the bridge and was pulled along by the struggle, or if one was trying to end his/her life and the other was pulled along. Monk soon discovers that the dead woman was Mary Havilland, that her own father had committed suicide a few months before -- something that quite devastated Mary -- and that the man who fell off the bridge with her was her ex-fiance, Toby Argyll.

Dark Assassin is the latest in Anne Perry's series of novels featuring William Monk and Hester Latterly, now his wife. In this story, Monk has taken a job with the River Police. One night while out on the river with his men, he and his crew witness the deaths of a man and a woman off a bridge over the Thames-- what they cannot decide, however, is if they witnessed a murder, a suicide or an accident. The case affects Monk deeply as he is reluctant to allow the deaths to be ruled suicide if there is a possibility that another verdict can be made so the young woman, particularly, can be buried in hallowed ground. He becomes especially suspicious when he finds that the young woman's father supposedly committed suicide a few weeks before. To investigate the two deaths, he teams up with Inspector Runcorn of the London Police, who had been Monk's partner in Monk's former life. Anne Perry excels at bringing Victorian England to life-- not just the romantic aspects, but the grittier reality of every day life. In this book she focuses on the building of the massive sewer

tunnels beneath the city, and the life underground. Perry doesn't flinch at showing the seamier sides of life, and she takes great pains to constantly let us know how sheltered the middle class and above are from the living conditions of the people who labor to make their privileged lives possible. So how does Hester fit into this story? She plunges right into it, as she, also, is disturbed at the idea of the young woman being wrongfully buried in unhallowed ground. It brings back memories of the suicide of her own father, many years before.

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