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A Christmas Promise (Christmas Novellas)



Synopsis

It's a freezing winter day in London, 1895, when two young girls have a chance meeting. The pair turn out to have much in common: both are poor, both are parentless. But Minnie Maude, only eight, has even worse problems: the uncle with whom she lived has just been murdered, and if that's not enough, the family's donkey has run away. Her new friend Gracie, all of thirteen, feels obliged to help her, and so the girls team up to solve the mystery and find Charlie the donkey. Anne Perry fans will recognize young Gracie as Charlotte Pitt's maid, a continuing character in the author's bestselling Charlotte and Thomas Pitt Victorian mystery series."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Reading Anne Perry's Christmas novelettes has become a Christmas tradition for me. This book is the seventh such book. For those that don't know, these stories are based on minor characters in the Thomas and Charlotte Pitt series or the William Monk series. This one is about Gracie, Thomas and Charlotte's maid. The story is set on the streets of London when Gracie was 13, before she came to the Pitts. Gracie is a street survivor, and she is asked to help an eight year old girl by the name of Minnie Maude Mudway to help her find her uncle's donkey that has been missing since her uncle was killed. It sounds simple enough to Gracie but she finds a whole underworld that she doesn't know exists and her and her little friend are in great danger. Of course this is set right around Christmas in keeping with the theme of these stories. This little book is endearing because Gracie is one of my favourite characters. Gracie shows determination and empathy for those who are even less fortunate than her. It's a heartwarming tale.

First Sentence: The week before Christmas, the smell and taste of it were in the air, a kind of excitement, an urgency about everything. A few days before Christmas, 13-year-old Gracie Phillips comes across 8 year-old Minnie Maude Mudway standing in the cold. Her uncle, a rag and bone man, was found dead in the street with his cart and Charlie, the mule, missing. Gracie starts out by promising to help her find Charlie, but goes on to help her find out who killed her uncle. Anne Perry's Christmas books are wonderful gifts to her readers and always feature one of the secondary characters of her series. A young, pre-Pitt family, Gracie takes center stage yet even at this young age, you see her grit, determination and indomitable spirit. She is determined that she'll learn to read and improve her life, but doesn't let her lack of skill stop her. Yet I so agree with the wonderful, slightly mysterious, Mr. Balthasar when he states, "...Everyone should read. There is a whole magical world waiting for you, people to meet and places to go, flights of the mind and the heart you can't even imagine." Speaking of places to go, the sense of time and place is one of the things I most admire in Ms. Perry's writing. You feel the cold wind and see the dirty alleys, but also the wreaths on the doors and the lights. The dialogue is written in dialect, which took me a bit to get on to, but I quickly forgot it was even there. Lest you think this is a light Christmas story; it's not. This is not the London of drawing rooms, but of back alleys, the poor, desperate and hungry. There is fear and cruelty and a mystery with tension, suspense and a wonderful ending. I look forward to seeing who Ms. Perry brings us next year.

A CHRISTMAS PROMISE (Hist Mys-Gracie Phipps-England-Victorian) - ExPerry, Anne - 7th Christmas book Ballantine Books, 2009, US Hardcover - ISBN: 9780345510662

Anne Perry is quite a lady and a prolific author. Her Christmas gifts to us are small novels that deal with a character from one of her Thomas and Charlotte Pitt or Hester and William Monk novels, and what impact they have in the story. I wrote Mrs. Perry and she sent me a Christmas card and I have it in the first of the series, and it is precious to me. This year's book deals with Gracie Phillips, the spunky maid and friend of the Pitts. This deals with a time just before she meets the Pitts and starts a new life with them. Gracie is thirteen and comes across an eight year old girl, Minnie Maude. Minnie is upset that her uncle, who is a pan handler, has been killed, and his cart and her beloved donkey, Charlie. Feeling sorry for Minnie, Gracie joins her after her chores and cleaning job, find the donkey, and see who killed Minnie's uncle. A wise man named Balthasar helps the girls unfurl the mystery and the girls have a gift for the Christ Child in the manger. Only they get the best gifts ever. It is a short, but very sweet read that means so much for us Anne Perry fans. Merry Christmas

Mrs.Perry! Thanks for your gift to us!

I really enjoy these Anne Perry Christmas stories. They are novellas. Very fine indeed. Some people who are not followers of Anne Perry buy these stories and then write negative reviews. Readers such as that should be aware that these novellas take place during the Victorian Age and Anne Perry presents conditions in the Victorian Age as they really were. So just as Charles Dickens wrote about the sad conditions of the Victorian Age, so does Anne Perry both in her full length mystery series and in these Christmas short novels. Things in the 19th century were very different than they are now in the 21st century. Keep that in mind if you have not read up on the Victorian age before you read your first Anne Perry.

It is nice to know what happens with some of Perry's characters before you met them for the first time. Gracie is true to form--wanting to help where she can. It was a lot for two little girls to accomplish but not necessarily impossible. I've known children to do extraordinary things in my time as a teacher.

In 1883 in London's dangerous East End, thirteen years old Gracie Phipps on an errand for Gran one week before Christmas meets a much younger urchin Minnie Maude Mudway, who says she is not lost. The child says Uncle Alf died and Charlie is missing and probably hungry, cold and frightened. Gracie keeps to herself the description probably applies to the emaciated Minnie. Gracie decides to help Minnie find Charlie the donkey and learn how her uncle, a bone-and-rag dealer, died. The unlikely youthful sleuths investigate with the guidance of shopkeeper Mr. Balthasar. They learn Uncle Alf diverted from his normal path and his cart held a mysterious gold box that Mr. Balthasar warns them to be cautious as every fool loses their senses when it comes to gold; let alone what might be inside. The seventh Christmas Victorian thriller is a terrific tale that brings to life the era and place through the two children, whose street smarts belie their age. The mystery mostly is used to enhance a look through the kids of life in the slums of late Victorian London during the holiday season. Fans of the author will enjoy what has become a Christmas tradition; an entreatingly Anne Perry historical. Harriet Klausner

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