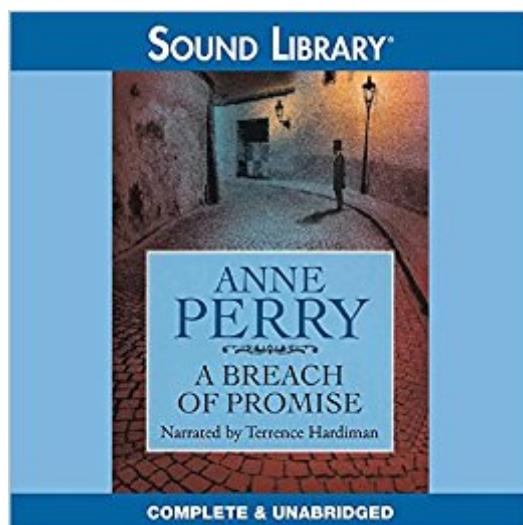


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# A Breach Of Promise (Chivers Sound Library American Collections (Audio))



## **Synopsis**

The plaintiffs in a sensational breach of promise suit are wealthy social climbers Barton and Delphine Lambert, suing on behalf of their beautiful daughter, Zillah. The defendant is Zillah's alleged fiance, brilliant young architect Killian Melville, who adamantly declares that he will not, cannot, marry her. Not even to his counsel, distinguished barrister Sir Oliver Rathbone, will Killian explain his rejection of rich and charming Zillah. Utterly baffled, Rathbone turns for help to his old comrades in crime--Monk, the private investigator who knows his city like the back of his hand, and fearless nurse Hester Latterly. But even as they scout London for clues, from Mayfair to sordid Devil's Acre, the case suddenly and tragically ends. An outcome that no one--except a ruthless murderer--could have foreseen.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

The promises that are breached, broken, and never born in Anne Perry's rich and resonant new William Monk mystery all have to do with the roles and positions of women in Victorian society. At the center of the book is a rousing courtroom drama, as young Zillah Lambert--daughter of a wealthy, well-meaning northern businessman and his socially ambitious wife--sues an immensely gifted architect, Killian Melville. Melville, Zillah argues, failed to live up to his promise of marriage and thereby ruined her chances of making any sort of acceptable match. Private detective Monk is brought into the case by lawyer Oliver Rathbone when his client (Melville), facing financial and social ruin, still refuses to offer any reason for his dastardly conduct. Monk's attentions are occupied

elsewhere, too. Hester Latterly, the courageous nurse who worked with Florence Nightingale in the Crimean War, and whose favors Monk and Rathbone both desire, is looking after a British officer, Gabriel Sheldon, who was badly wounded and disfigured in India. Gabriel's wife, Perdita, is having trouble adjusting to her husband's broken body and spirit. "It was not Perdita's fault that she was confused and frightened," Monk muses. "She had been protected all her short life. She had not chosen to be, it was her assigned role." Monk has also promised a housemaid in the Sheldons' service that he will look for her two little nieces--deaf and deformed from birth--who were abandoned by their mother almost 20 years before. As the cases tangle and combine (perhaps a tad too coincidentally for some tastes, but, then again, real life is full of coincidences), Perry manages to show us the many ways in which women were made to pay for their place in a male-dominated society. She also delivers a touching and surprisingly suspenseful story. Other Monk books in paperback: *The Silent Cry*, *Cain His Brother*, *Defend and Betray*, *Weighed in the Balance*. --Dick Adler --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In this latest William Monk tale (after *The Silent Cry*, 1997), Perry offers her strongest indictment yet of Victorian England and a society "where beauty and reputation were the yardsticks of worth." Barrister Sir Oliver Rathbone defends Killian Melville, a talented young architect, in a breach of promise suit brought by Melville's benefactor, Barton Lambert, in support of Lambert's daughter Zillah. Melville insists that Mrs. Lambert, desperate that her daughter marry, misconstrued his friendship with the young woman. Meanwhile, Hester Latterly is hired to nurse Gabriel Athol, who was tragically injured in India and whose wife, Perdita, finds her desire to understand his suffering thwarted by a brother-in-law who insists that women be shielded from the realities of war and violence. Hester befriends Perdita's maid, Martha, who is desperate to find her two deaf, disfigured nieces who vanished years ago when her brother died and his wife disappeared. Rathbone hires Monk to investigate Melville and the Lamberts; Hester implores Monk to help Martha. The first case ends tragically before the startling truth behind Melville's refusal to marry is revealed; the second project ends on a happier note. Perry does a masterful job depicting Victorian hypocrisy regarding women. But she draws her stories together with an incredible connection whose dissonance spoils an otherwise exceptional novel. Mystery Guild main selection. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

**SPOILER ALERT:** Do not read any further in this review if you are reading the series in chronological order and you haven't finished this particular book. This one started out quite slowly

and I certainly didn't expect it to rate 5 stars. The continual talk about architecture was a snooze fest, especially since Ms. Perry kept repeating the same two or three descriptive phrases over and over. And the idea she tosses out that just because someone is brilliant creatively then they can't be a bad person is ludicrous. Once the trial starts, however, and Monk gets involved, the pace of the story picks up. The shocking revelation during the trial was exactly that. Shocking. I certainly never suspected the truth about Melville's identity. Well done, Ms. Perry. On the personal side, Monk's passionate defense of Hester to Perdita and his proclamation of his feelings brought tears to my eyes. Finally! Thank heavens, he didn't retract simply because of embarrassment as he was tempted. About the case of Melville's poisoning. As soon as Monk talked to the courthouse guard, I knew how Keelin had been killed and by whom. Right away he should have thought to ask Hester how the poison might be administered without eating or drinking. She certainly has the proper knowledge. Later on, he is actually the one who figured it out. Did not see the ending coming. I expected Monk to express his love for Hester, not to propose. YES! Of course, leave it to Monk to propose in a graveyard. I can't wait to read of the new depths to their relationship and their feelings for each other. In my excitement over the engagement, I nearly forgot to add the list of interesting names and there were plenty in this book! Zillah. Perdita. Phemie. Athol (sounds like a gasoline). Wystan. Keelin (which is actually quite pretty, but I do like Irish names).

So far this is my favorite of the Monk series. The last one was my least favorite so I wasn't sure if I would enjoy this one but from the first I was caught up in the drama of a breach of promise suit that ended in death but which also led to a 21 year old mystery of two disfigured girls given up by their mother. How this all was related was the great fun of reading this book. Not to mention the last page of so had me saying, "Finally!"

I have just finished this book...well, 1:00 this morning. I am new to Anne Perry (within the last year) and wonder how I ever missed reading her. I love mysteries and love the Victorian era. I downloaded this book Saturday and finished, as I said at 1:00 am Monday morning! I absolutely LOVE her writing. I usually am able to figure out most plots by the end of the book - but this one I never saw coming! The "twists" were pretty big and hadn't even entered my mind! Anne's details are amazing - you can actually know what it was like to live in this era. Something I thought I might always like...not so much anymore. It was a hard time for many people. I like that Anne does not sugar-coat any of it. I believe she gives a true perspective of what life was like then...good and bad. You definitely will become invested in the characters and know them quite well - yet may be

surprised by many of their actions. If you like intelligently written mysteries - then I would highly recommend Anne Perry. I am looking forward to the next in the series and will be sad when I have read the final one.

I agree with other reviewers that the trial phase, at least, is very slow and the same material is repeated again and again. Was there a required word count? My biggest concern is that there were far too many credibility issues. I don't believe Victorian etiquette would have approved of the parade of outsiders into a family's private quarters, or that a member of the gentry would have accosted a perfect stranger awaiting an introduction in his brother's home and discussed a personal issue concerning his sister-in-law. A conventionally brought-up young wife would not have berated her brother-in-law in front of guests, and the ever meticulous and composed Delphine could not have possibly been so foolish as to severely censure her daughter in the presence of her nemesis, Mr. Monk. I realize that Ms. Perry was trying to make a point about the strictures of Victorian society, but I think she forgot about Victorian manners, and the story suffered for it. In addition, perhaps because I have not read her other books, I was often confused between Sir Oliver and Mr. Monk. In this tale, at least, they were nearly one and the same: both frustrated in the extreme over the case, both interviewing a string of friends and acquaintances in much the same way, both relying on the intuition and advice of Hester Latterly, both in love with Ms. Latterly but not knowing how to proceed. It would have been helpful if the author had delineated the differences in their roles a little more. At the end, it was quite a surprise that she would choose one over the other.

There wasn't an option for 4.5 stars so I gave it 5. Interesting perspective and story. I was not familiar with William Monk novels so I felt a tad lost with his character development. Still a good light read though.

The very curious mystery at the heart of this book kept me glued to it page after page. I'm a long time devoted fan of Anne Perry's novels, so how I missed this one over the years is a puzzlement to me. I'm certainly delighted that I found it as it was very engrossing and as all her books, it's social issue is still relevant today. At this point in the saga the romance between Hester and Monk is just beginning to ignite. Having read all the other books in this series including the most recent, I just wish Ms. Perry would emphasize some of the marital romance that we must assume exists between these two spicey lead characters. I'm not interested in sordid details just a nod to the passion that Hester and Monk would enjoy equally and would fly in the face of Victorian morals.

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