



# Breaking Silence

*Linda Castillo*

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## **Breaking Silence** Linda Castillo

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The Slabaugh family are model Amish farmers, prosperous and hardworking, with four children and a happy extended family. When the parents and an uncle are found dead in their barn, it appears to be a gruesome accident: methane gas asphyxiation caused by a poorly ventilated cesspit. But in the course of a routine autopsy, the coroner discovers that one of the victims suffered a head wound before death—clearly, foul play was involved. But who would want to make orphans of the Slabaughs' children? And is this murder somehow related to a recent string of shocking hate crimes against the Amish?

Having grown up Amish, Kate is determined to bring the killer to justice. Because the other series of attacks are designated hate crimes, the state sends in agent John Tomasetti, with whom Kate has a long and complex relationship. Together, they search for the link between the crimes—and uncover a dark secret at work beneath the placid surface of this idyllic Amish community.

## **Breaking Silence Details**

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# From Reader Review Breaking Silence for online ebook

**Sandy \*The world could end while I was reading and I would never notice\* says**

EXCERPT: Pickles was midway to his cruiser when his radio cracked to life. "What now?" he growled.

"Pickles, I got a ten-fifty-two out at the Slabaugh farm. David Troyer just called, said they got three people down in the manure pit."

"Shit." Pickles fumbled for his lapel mike. Back in the day, a cop had a radio in his cruiser. If he chose to ignore a call, he could. Now, you carried the damn thing around like some weird body part, one end clipped to your belt, one end stuck in your ear, and a microphone pinned to your chest like some damn medal. "You call EMS?"

"They're en route. Thought you might want to get out there."

Pickles heaved another sigh; he'd just about had all the mud and shit he could handle for one night. But he knew a manure pit could be a dangerous place. There were all sorts of nasty gases that would do you in faster than a gas chamber if you weren't careful. "What's the twenty on that?"

"Three six four Township Road Two."

Pickles knew the area. It was a dirt track south of town that would be hell to traverse without a four-wheel-drive vehicle. Figuring this was the end of his Lucchese boots, he cursed. "You might want to call the chief."

"Roger that."

"I'm ten-seventy-six," he said, and forced his old legs into a run.

THE BLURB: Police Chief Kate Burkholder is called to the scene of a horrific tragedy on a peaceful Amish farm.

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MY THOUGHTS: I knew Castillo was good, but this is the best of the Kate Burkholder series yet. Breaking Silence is a real page turner.

There are multiple themes running through Breaking Silence, hate crimes, incest, psychological manipulation, bullying. There are no graphic descriptions, nothing to cause alarm for those for whom one or more of these

subjects may be triggers. Everything is dealt with with a great deal of sensitivity. And yet Castillo still manages to deliver a riveting read.

I don't even begin to understand those who commit hate crimes. What do the perpetrators hope to achieve? It seems to me to be a pointless waste of time on all fronts. I was no closer to understanding it at the end of the book.

The end of the book . . . Just when I thought everything was solved and sorted, Castillo turned in upside down and inside out, and we were off in pursuit of the criminal again. There are lots of twists and turns and plenty of action in this read. Highly recommended. ?????

I listened to the audio book version of Breaking Silence by Linda Castillo, narrated by Kathleen McInerney, published by MacMillan Audio via OverDrive. All opinions expressed in this review are entirely my own personal opinions. Please refer to my Goodreads.com profile page or the 'about' page on sandysbookaday.wordpress.com for an explanation of my rating system. This review and others are also published on my blog sandysbookaday.wordpress.com <https://sandysbookaday.wordpress.com/>...

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### **Magpie67 says**

Brilliant series. An accidental death turns to murder when a husband, his wife and his brother are pulled out dead from a poorly ventilated cesspit under the hogs. Religion had two sides as always in the case of Amish vs Englishers. Along side this case is the rampant bully issues causing much grief and permanent damage to property. No one will prosecute and being an ex-member works for Kate and against her. Once she was an innocent until a man took that away from her at the age of 14. Now here is another young girl being taken advantage of, it grates on her nerves. Young love, murder and mystery with witty dialogue and a bit of romance as Kate and John venture forward into their relationship. Both are broken souls wanting to share their heart with each other... but still doing a dance trying to trust one another. The hate crimes are terrible. They always are and I don't understand them in our society.

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### **Maureen DeLuca says**

Book number 3 in this series, and so far I'm a huge fan! If you never read any of these books, do yourself a favor, start with book number 1....and don't look back...

So many wonderful reviews here, so I'm not even going to bother to write more about this book...a bread read, a great series by a great writer...that's all you need to know!

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### **Barbara says**

#### **3.5 stars**

Police Chief Kate Burkholder of Painter's Mill, Ohio was raised Amish, but left the fold after a traumatic incident in her teens. Nevertheless, Kate understands and empathizes with the local Amish community, an

insular group that avoids interaction with the 'English.'

In this third book in the series Kate has to deal with a series of hate crimes as well as multiple deaths.

Like many minorities, the Painter's Mill Amish are sometimes subject to prejudice and abuse, and - as the story opens - a couple of thugs sneak into an Amish farm and slaughter four sheep.....just for fun. This is followed by other hate crimes such as: a Molotov cocktail being hurled into an Amish buggy; an Amish farmer being beaten, tied, and left out in the freezing cold; an Amish teen being brutalized and slashed with a buggy whip; a deliberately set barn fire that results in a death; and so on.

In the midst of these incidents an Amish family experiences an unthinkable tragedy. Solly Slabaugh, his wife Rachel, and his brother Abel are found dead in the Slabaugh farm's manure pit, where the decomposing hog poop gives off deadly methane gas. The tragedy leaves four orphans - Mose (17), Salome (15), Samuel (12), and Ike (10) - whose custody becomes a contentious issue. An excommunicated uncle wants to care for the kids, but he's strongly opposed by Amish Bishop Troyer and his congregants.

The Slabaugh disaster seems like an accident at first, but turns out to be murder. Kate and her team investigate with the help of John Tomasetti from the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation, who's also Kate's (secret) boyfriend. The cops have to figure out whether the Slabaugh deaths are part of the string of hate crimes - or something else - before they can identify and catch the perpetrator. This isn't easy, especially since the persecuted Amish refuse to cooperate with the authorities and won't say what they saw, who attacked them, etc.

The case takes a heavy toll on Kate, who - try as she might - can't avoid getting emotionally involved with the investigation. As a result Kate broods a lot, drinks too much, and has some blind spots in relation to the crimes. Tomasetti, who's very protective, does his best to keep Kate grounded.

The developing romance between Kate and Tomasetti is low-key since they both have distressing histories and problems with commitment. However, Kate does tend to go on a bit about how attractive and sexy Tomasetti is.....so if you like that kind of thing, there you have it! (LOL)

There are some surprises in the story as well as scenes where Kate is attacked and placed in jeopardy - so there's plenty of excitement. Kate's a very tough cookie, though, who can take care of herself.

I enjoy the 'Kate Burkholder' books, which are well-plotted, well-written, and provide interesting glimpses into Amish life. In this book the author emphasizes how important family is to the Amish, how much they value their children, and how kind they are to other people. It's touching to see Amish friends and neighbors rally around after the Slabaughs are killed - to take care of the children; look after the farm; and see to the livestock.

This is a good book that I'd recommend to readers who enjoy mysteries, especially Kate Burkholder fans.

Though it's best to read the series from the beginning to know the backstories of the main characters, I've found that each book can be read as a standalone without any problems.

You can follow my reviews at <https://reviewsbybarbsaffer.blogspot....>

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## **Tammie says**

Breaking Silence is the third book in the Kate Burkholder series. I did not like it as much as the previous installments, and to be honest, I don't think Kate Burkholder has any business being the Chief of Police. Kate's issues over her past are getting a little old at this point. She is drinking a lot and even driving while drunk now, which is unacceptable for anyone, but as Chief of Police it especially crosses a line. She is supposed to be an example of upholding the law for goodness sake! She might be a fictional character, but this actually made me really angry, especially because I know someone who was hit and severely injured by an off duty cop who was driving while drunk. I don't care if Tomasetti followed her home, she shouldn't have been behind the wheel. I have a hard time sympathizing with her after this.

Tomasetti on the other hand grew on me. He seems to have made huge strides in overcoming his demons and is now trying to help Kate who seems to be spiraling downward. There was some movement forward in the relationship between Kate and Tomasetti also, which I liked.

Other issues I had with the book were:

- The Amish kids were treated and described a lot younger than they were. The 10 and 12 year old seemed as though they were 3 and 6.
- Inaccurate behavior for an Amish kid, even if this kid was (view spoiler).
- Some of the red herrings really didn't make sense. Especially one of them, it was like the author had the idea to include it to throw us off, but couldn't come up with a good reason for it to have happened. (view spoiler)
- Kate and Tomasetti once again angered me with the way they treat suspects. They really didn't have to arrest that poor guy right in front of his kids. They could have stepped out onto the porch with him first.

For some reason I'm still interested in this series. I really can't figure out why since I now dislike the main character quite a bit. Maybe it's because I want to see her overcome her demons and get to a better place. I don't know, but I will probably stick with the series a little longer.

Review also posted at Writings of a Reader

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## **Brenda says**

When Police Chief Kate Burkholder was woken in the early hours of the morning, she had no idea that she was about to be faced with a horrific tragedy. Called out to the Slabaugh farm, home of a hardworking Amish family comprising of two adults and four children, they were confronted with the deaths of the parents and an uncle in the barn. An apparent accident caused by methane gas from the cesspit, the lack of ventilation obvious to Kate and her officers immediately they entered the barn; but the autopsy showed otherwise – one of the victims appeared to have a head wound made by a blunt object. Was this connected to the spate of vicious hate attacks which had been occurring against the Amish in the past few months?

Kate was determined to get to the bottom of the horrible crime. She felt emotionally involved with the

Slabaugh children, so much so that she knew it would affect her work if she wasn't careful. When Agent John Tomasetti arrived on the scene to assist with the investigation, Kate was happy he was there. Kate and John had a complex relationship, having worked together on cases before; they also both had secrets in their past – but their attraction to each other was something they weren't willing to give up on either.

As they dug deeper into the secrets of the Amish community and in particular the Slabaugh family, the horrors only deepened. Would they discover who the killer was? Was there a link to the continued attacks within the community?

What a brilliant thriller! I've only recently begun reading Linda Castillo's Kate Burkholder series, with this being the third in the series. The twists and turns, the chilling and gritty nature of the plot – all in all, a fabulous book! I loved it so much, I reserved the next one at my library as soon as I'd finished this one! Highly recommended.

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### **Brenda H says**

Breaking Silence is the third book in the Kate Burkholder series by Linda Castillo. Chief of Police Kate Burkholder awakens to her office calling to notify her of an emergency at the Slabaugh farm. Kate and emergency personnel rush to the scene only to find that they are too late. What at first seems to be a tragic accident is soon determined to be murder.

In addition to the incident at the Slabaugh farm, Painter's Mill and the rest of the County are experiencing a rash of crimes against the local Amish community involving beatings, fires and attacks on their farm animals. The County Sheriff contacts the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation to assist with the hate crimes and John Tomasetti of the BCI – and Kate's occasional lover – comes to town.

Interesting storylines and a bit of a twist ending make for a good read. In addition, the reader is seeing the changes in both Kate and Tomasetti and in them together. Kate still struggles regularly with her Amish upbringing and her current life as an "Englischer". Definitely a series that I will continue.

Rating: 4 Stars

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### **Marian says**

The Slabaugh family are model Amish farmers, prosperous and hardworking, with four children and a happy extended family. When the parents and an uncle are found dead in their barn, it appears to be a gruesome accident: methane gas asphyxiation caused by a poorly ventilated cesspit. But in the course of a routine autopsy, the coroner discovers that one of the victims suffered a head wound before death—clearly, foul play was involved. But who would want to make orphans of the Slabaughs' children? And is this murder somehow related to a recent string of shocking hate crimes against the Amish?

Having grown up Amish, Kate is determined to bring the killer to justice. Because the other series of attacks are designated hate crimes, the state sends in agent John Tomasetti, with whom Kate has a long and complex relationship. Together, they search for the link between the crimes—and uncover a dark secret at work

beneath the placid surface of this idyllic Amish community.

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### **Jim says**

The third book in the Kate Burkholder series and going strong. This is one of my favorite new (to me) series.

The story opens with a pair of men committing a hate crime. Sneaking onto the farm of an Amish woman and killing her sheep. This is just the latest in a series of similar hate crimes against the Amish around Painters Mill. Then things taken an even more gruesome turn. The on duty police officer gets another call. There are three people down in a manure pit at the Slabaugh farm.

Chief of Police Kate Burkholder gets called out too. The Slabaugh family are model Amish farmers, prosperous and hardworking, with four children. The parents and an uncle are found dead in a poorly ventilated cesspit in the barn. At first it would appear to be a tragic accident but during the autopsy the coroner discovers that one of the victims had suffered a head wound before death. It was not caused by the fall into the pit and it was no accident. The Slabaugh's were killed. But who would want them dead and why? Is it related to the recent string of hate crimes?

Because there are ongoing hate crimes the state sends in agent John Tomasetti with whom Kate has developed a complex relationship. They work together to try and figure out who killed the Slabaugh's and why. The case takes a heavy toll on Kate who can't help but get emotionally involved having been raised Amish. She is drinking more than she probably should and becomes close with the four orphaned Slabaugh children, especially with the daughter, 15-year-old Salome.

The title of the book comes from the Amish resisting help from outsiders and refusing to press charges against those who commit despicable and cowardly crimes. In order to solve these crimes Kate will need to break the silence. Because Kate was raised Amish but left there is some tension between her and the Amish community but also an understanding of the people. Life in the Amish community is vividly portrayed in this series.

I would recommend this book to readers who enjoy strong female lead characters such as Robert Dugoni's Tracy Crosswhite series or Angela Marsons's Kim Stone series.

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### **Liz says**

The third in the Kate Burkholder series and also very well done.

There are hate crimes being committed against the Amish and Kate has to figure out if a murder is part of those crimes or something different. The hate crimes are also made more difficult to solve because of the Amish folks' unwillingness to get involved with the English world. Thus, the title, Breaking the Silence, is especially poignant as Kate strives to get even one of the Amish to do just that.



The more I learn of Kate, the more I appreciate her and feel an affinity with her. She's sharp and insightful but warm and caring. She struggles to find the balance between caring and being impartial. Her relationship with Tomasetti continues to evolve.

This is a straightforward, no nonsense police procedural. The writing is detailed yet crisp, giving you enough color to be able to picture the scenes. And Castillo throws in some spot on commentary such as “insomnia is an insidious thing: a silent and invisible malady that robs the afflicted not only of sleep but also peace of mind, sometimes for months on end.” Or this which I loved - “the alcohol has rendered my IQ somewhere between that of a toddler and a German Shepherd.”

Looking forward to reading the balance of the series.

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### **Julie (A Girl and a Book) says**

Damn! I seriously love this series so much. It has just the right amount of darkness that I love in a thriller and the characters are all fantastic. I really just can't get enough of it.

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### **Mary Gilligan-Nolan says**

I do like this series, I really do, but this is the third book about a small town called Painters Mill, which has an Amish Community, but I feel at this point, there have been so many Amish murders in such a small town, there can't be many more left. If I were Amish, I'd get the hell out of Dodge at this stage. Aside from this, Kate Burkeholder, Chief of Police, is slipping further towards a breakdown by the looks of it, definitely, she is two steps away from a 12 step programme and need to get her drinking problem under control. Agent John Tomasetti is called into a near-by town to investigate hate crimes against the Amish community and then when a link is established between that and a case Kate is working one, he comes to her aide once again. One other thing irked me in this book, the Police have no qualms about really going after someone that they even feel is innocent and treating them pretty badly. For instance, one poor guy was slung in jail indefinitely, even though Kate didn't really feel he was involved, but she refused to release him, even when his lawyer complained. It just didn't make sense. And don't get me started on the drink-driving laws in the town, the police seem to head for the bar every night and have no problems driving to and fro. And, while in uniform!! You'd be sacked on the spot for drinking in uniform in Ireland and I am sure, in the U.K. also. Anyway, the story was still o.k. I can't say I didn't enjoy it, but I've read better this week.

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### **Jonetta says**

Following a series of attacks directed at the Amish community, law enforcement concludes they are hate crimes. When the Slabaugh parents and uncle, Amish farmers, are found dead in their barn, it's not immediately clear whether the crimes are related. One of the many issues pursued by Kate and her team is to investigate all and determine if there is a connection.

This story had so many twists and turns I almost got whiplash! Every time I thought I had things solved,

another wrench would be thrown into my suppositions. As with the first two books, the crimes are gritty and require multi jurisdictional support. Connecting the clues was a wonderful challenge.

Kate and John Tomasetti make progress in their relationship but it's not easy. I really like how they're portrayed, boils and all, adding a strong, realistic element to their story.

I'm hopelessly hooked on this series, especially the audio performance by Kathleen McInerney who continues to make a really good story exceptional. I've already got the next book in the queue.

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## **Audrey says**

This is the third book in this series and it was just okay for me. The mystery was pretty good, there are two plots going on at once, a killing of Amish parents and an Uncle in a manure pit and the other is a series of really nasty hate crimes against the Amish citizens of Chief of Police Kate's town.

I think my biggest problem I had with the book was all the time spent on Kate's wrestling with her personal demons, the drinking and smoking she resorts to whenever she has trouble handling a situation or something in a case reminds her of some of the horrors of her past.

There was also some time spent on Kate and John and their new relationship and since they both have some really awful stuff to deal with from their pasts and deep wounds that need to heal this could take some time to develop.

The mystery is pretty good a few surprises but I did see a few of the twists ahead of time.

All in all this book was good, not great, and I still want to continue to read the next books in the series.

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## **Linda says**

**~3.5 stars~**

Once again, Kate Burkholder is caught up with the darker side of a small-town crisis. Life amongst the Amish hits a snag when two parents and an uncle are found dead at the bottom of a *manure pit* in their barn. {Yikes, it gives new meaning when I think of composting and my garden!} To make matters worse, hate crimes have found a home in Painters Mill, Ohio.

We see less of her police staff in *BREAKING SILENCE* and more of Tomasetti. The door to Kate's fragile past creaks open a little wider and John offers a much-needed shoulder to lean on. I like John with his warts and all. The suspense is good but not as intense as the first two stories in the series. Still, Ms. Castillo takes a subject that is taboo and expounds on it.

Though some people consider the author's stories murder-mysteries, I think of them as sooty thrillers connected by the characters. It is hard to imagine that in a community of 5,000-plus people, this amount of nasty crime is committed. More so, because the peaceful Amish are included.

