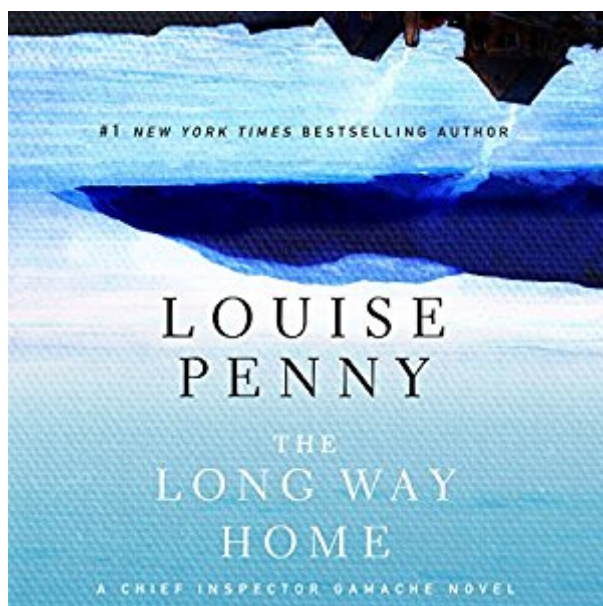


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The Long Way Home: Chief Inspector Gamache, Book 10



Synopsis

Happily retired in the village of Three Pines, Armand Gamache, former Chief Inspector of Homicide with the Sûreté du Québec, has found a peace he'd only imagined possible. On warm summer mornings he sits on a bench holding a small book, *The Balm in Gilead*, in his large hands. "There is a balm in Gilead," his neighbor Clara Morrow reads from the dust jacket, "to make the wounded whole." While Gamache doesn't talk about his wounds and his balm, Clara tells him about hers. Peter, her artist husband, has failed to come home. Failed to show up as promised on the first anniversary of their separation. She wants Gamache's help to find him. Having finally found sanctuary, Gamache feels a near revulsion at the thought of leaving Three Pines. "There's power enough in Heaven," he finishes the quote as he contemplates the quiet village, "to cure a sin-sick soul." And then he gets up. And joins her. Together with his former second-in-command, Jean-Guy Beauvoir, and Myrna Landers, they journey deeper and deeper into Québec. And deeper and deeper into the soul of Peter Morrow. A man so desperate to recapture his fame as an artist, he would sell that soul. And may have. The journey takes them further and further from Three Pines, to the very mouth of the great St. Lawrence river. To an area so desolate, so damned, the first mariners called it The land God gave to Cain. And there they discover the terrible damage done by a sin-sick soul.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The other books I have read in the Inspector Gamache series have been an interesting combination

of the classic police procedural with great attention to the character's emotional perceptions and internal states. It generally has worked. However, in her latest, *The Long Way Home*, Louise Penny seems to have become unmoored from the discipline of the police procedural to the detriment of the novel. There is indeed a central mystery, what has become of Peter, and a crime. However, this all gets lost in a mish-mash that feels more like chick-lit beach read. The crime is contrived and not particularly medically accurate. The paintings, which contain many of the clues, both external and psychological, are endlessly analyzed and re-analyzed. Frankly, I just didn't buy the ever-evolving data discerned from the paintings. At times the book seemed more of a travelogue and pitch from the Canadian Tourist board, than a crime novel. Atmosphere is one thing, this was another. The endless planes, trains and automobiles became tedious. The fateful climax, rather than feeling like the culminations of many journeys, internal and external, just seemed contrived. All this being said, *The Long Way Home* is mostly an enjoyable and thought provoking read. Underneath all of it remains Penny's central concern; how do flawed individuals live as moral beings, true to themselves, in a world that contains no small measure of violence and evil. In that she differs little from the hard-boiled genre of Raymond Chandler. Penny's unique contribution in the village of Three Pines, a glimpse of how life could actually be when good people care about each others, themselves and their arts of their work. After *How the Light Gets In*, I did not expect that Gamache would remain forever in enlightened bliss in his Nirvana in the woods. The Bodhisattva re-enters the world in deep compassion. Here's hoping that there is a next journey where the issues above do not detract from the telling.

This book is very different from Ms Penny's other novels. Sadly different from my perspective. This isn't really a mystery novel, it's more a psychological study of a jealous man. There is a tiny sliver of mystery in the book - but very tiny and since it doesn't really play out till the end, it is almost nonexistent in the overall plot. Most of the story revolves around Gamache, Beauvoir, Clara and Myrna looking at art and feeling its impact on their psyches. There are side trips in the book - a visit by phone to Scotland, several trips to a university, time spent on a boat and in a plane - resulting in pages of psychological discussion, but adding very little to the story. Gamache is retired, and happy, but troubled. His wife is happy, but troubled by the thought that Gamache might be troubled. Jean Guy is happy with Annie, but troubled - Annie is happy, but troubled. Well, you probably get the picture. It's a conflicted story. While many of Penny's novels do get into the souls of the characters, this one takes it three steps further and without the mystery thread, it's a little tiresome for people who are looking for "mystery thrillers". Worse, from my tastes, it delves deeply into Peter's art which

is described as "merde" (which translates to s***), dog breakfast, dog vomit, bad, pathetic - well, you get the picture. Given these descriptions, the amount of time spent looking at the paintings through various sets of eyes is an annoying waste of reading time. There are more issues, but my final comment is that while Louise Penny is a good writer - she can paint a landscape or person with words better than almost any author I've read - this novel is not the mystery genre I expected from her. It's a psychological delving into troubled people and troubled art. People I liked in past stories are unlikeable in this one. And fair warning - the ending was horrible. I wish I'd never read this book.

I was almost half through this book and felt I have never been so bored. The characters I had come to love were being dismantled page by page. My strong Inspector Gamache was sitting on a benchlooking in the distance. The only character I really thought was made "better" was Ruth, and I liked her very much. But this psychological trip into the psyche of all the characters, and looking for unrealistic depths in unreal characters was really to me a terrible waste of time. All the analyzing of art and the emotional impact it may or may not have on a person was so irrelevant.... Art is what it is to whomever looks at it. In the final pages there was definitely a plot that did come together with some attempt at suspense and enlightenment, but the ending of the book to me was extremely disappointing, unnecessary and made the rest of the book meaningless as far as I was concerned. I am sorry that the characters come away from this book definitely "less".

What a disappointment! I had become an avid fan of Louise Penny's mysteries, reading all of them over a period of a couple of months. "The Beautiful Mystery" was one of the most remarkable books I have ever read. I simply could not wait for the next book! But -- this??? This book is absolutely awful!! What happened, Louise?? Is there a ghost writer helping you to turn out these books a bit faster (as per James Patterson, or whatever that mystery writer's name is)? It was a disturbing book, in a most UNpleasant sense of the word. It was melodramatic, like a rather ridiculous soap opera, at many points. Gamache was NOT up to snuff; he ought to have remained in retirement, and told Clara to go hire someone to do the job. And killing off a main character (as if there weren't far more than enough drama with each main character, as it is), to use Ruth's language, SUCKED. I wish I'd quit reading after "Beautiful Mystery."

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