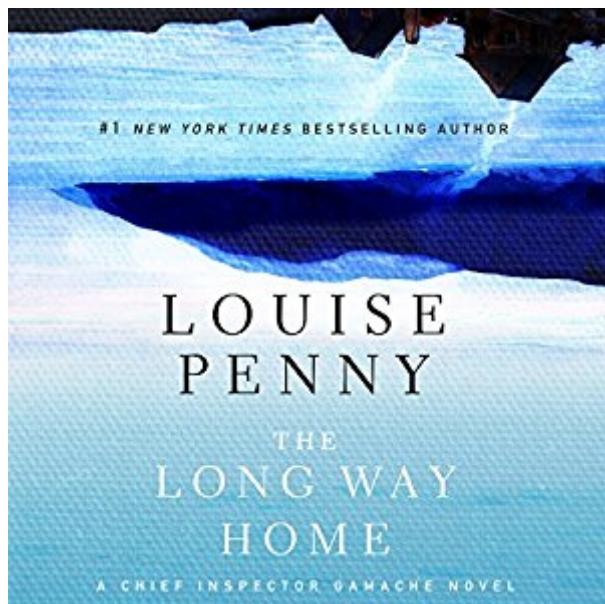


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The Long Way Home: Chief Inspector Gamache, Book 10



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.

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Customer Reviews

Chief Inspector Armand Gamache has retired from the Quebec Surete. He and his wife have

moved from Montreal to the village of Three Pines, not far from the Vermont border. Three Pines is the place Gamanche finds a sense of peace and rest, even though it has been the scene of so many murders investigated by Gamanche. One of the Three Pines residents is Clara Morrow, an artist who rather unexpectedly became something of a sensation with a recent show in Montreal. Her husband Peter had been the nationally recognized artist in the family, until Clara's show. And then it appeared she had surpassed him. Peter reacted badly, so badly that he tried to sabotage her work. The Morrows had agreed to separate for a year, and then meet to decide if their marriage could survive. The year passes, and Clara hears nothing. Finally, she asks Gamanche to help find Peter. Gamanche asks his long-time Surete assistant and now son-in-law, Jean-Guy Beauvoir, to help. The clues are sparse. They discover Peter had gone to Paris, Florence, and Venice, and then to a small town in Scotland. The three cities make sense for an artist trying to find himself and renew his art, but a small town in Scotland? Using what appear to be some very bad paintings left with Morrow family members in Toronto, Gamanche and Beauvoir continue their search. The closer they get, the more they find danger, and murder.

The Long Way Home by Canadian author Louise Penny is the tenth (of twelve) Chief Inspector Gamache novels. As is Penny's style and depth, it is an intriguing mystery, but it is also much more "a reflection into what is art, what inspires artists, and what happens when the muse flees. Or is killed. The residents of Three Pines themselves figure as part of the investigating team; it is one of their own who is missing. And Penny has created some of the most memorable ongoing characters in mystery fiction, including the psychologist-turned-bookstore owner Myrna Slater, the celebrated poet with the waspish tongue and four-letter vocabulary Ruth Zardo (and her wonderful duck Rosa), the cafe and bed-and-breakfast owners Olivier and Gabriel, and now also Reine-Marie, Gamache's beloved wife.

The Long Way Home is vintage Gamache and vintage Louise Penny, an ugly story of murder, jealousy, and revenge told so beautifully that the ugliness is muted and controlled.

It's always good to visit with Chief Inspector Armand Gamache, and *THE LONG WAY HOME* is no exception. The mystery elements of the story are complex, and the solution is hinted at (but well hidden) until the end. Sometimes a mystery ends with the reader saying "What? How did that happen?" because the author withheld crucial information, didn't play fair with the reader. In a well-told mystery, the reader says "I should have known!" Thinking back on the foreshadowing, and the clues that Louise Penny gave, I should'a known! The ending was not quite a surprise, but the "long way home" taken to get there was. All that said, I can't give this book a higher rating; 3 1/2

stars would be more accurate. It just wasn't as good as some (most) of the previous in this series. It dragged a bit, and wandered somewhat, and seemed to be made of small scraps of story that never quite pulled together into a unified whole.

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.

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