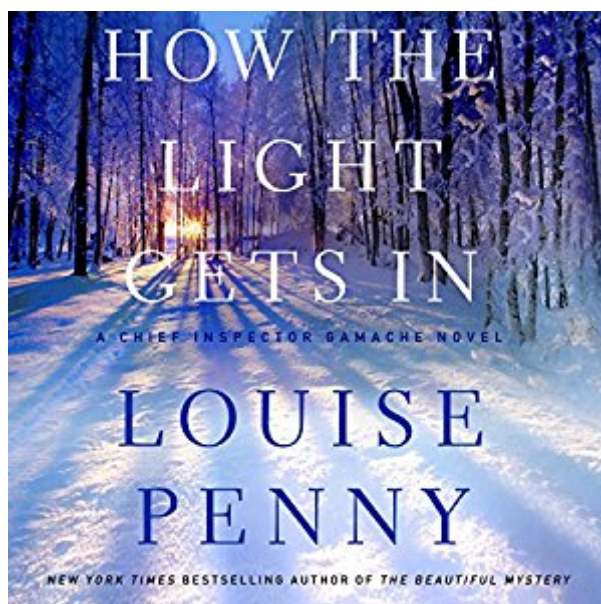


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How The Light Gets In: A Chief Inspector Gamache Novel, Book 9



Synopsis

"There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in." (Leonard Cohen) Christmas is approaching, and in Québec it's a time of dazzling snowfalls, bright lights, and gatherings with friends in front of blazing hearths. But shadows are falling on the usually festive season for Chief Inspector Armand Gamache. Most of his best agents have left the Homicide Department, his old friend and lieutenant Jean-Guy Beauvoir hasn't spoken to him in months, and hostile forces are lining up against him. When Gamache receives a message from Myrna Landers that a longtime friend has failed to arrive for Christmas in the village of Three Pines, he welcomes the chance to get away from the city. Mystified by Myrna's reluctance to reveal her friend's name, Gamache soon discovers the missing woman was once one of the most famous people not just in North America, but in the world, and now goes unrecognized by virtually everyone except the mad, brilliant poet Ruth Zardo. As events come to a head, Gamache is drawn ever deeper into the world of Three Pines. Increasingly, he is not only investigating the disappearance of Myrna's friend but also seeking a safe place for himself and his still-loyal colleagues. Is there peace to be found even in Three Pines? And at what cost to Gamache and the people he holds dear?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Constance Pineault is the kind of woman you hope would move to the winsome village of Three Pines. She is self-sufficient, feels motherly to bistro owners Gabri and Olivier, is friends with bookstore owner Myrna, drinks happily with mad poet Ruth, and is even considering getting a

duck. But there is a mystery about Constance. She won't let Clara paint her portrait. It is almost as if she has a secret in her past. Perhaps a big one. Perhaps a secret someone would kill for. "Who doesn't have a secret?" asks crazy Ruth. Secrets, and the revealing of them, is Inspector Gamache's focus in this book. It seems everyone has them. There's the mysterious death of a woman by a bridge he passed - why would a young woman jump over a bridge in a cold Canadian winter Gamache wonders. Then there's the mystery regarding Gamache's cunning supervisor, Chief Superintendent Francoeur, who is decimating Gamache's homicide department and ordering Gamache's former assistant Jean-Guy Beauvoir on dangerous raids. Is Francoeur trying to drive Gamache and Beauvoir over the edge, or is something deeper and more sinister at play? And what about the secrets in Constance's past? The sleepy little village of Three Pines is about to have a rude awakening. Even high tech visits it in Gamache's efforts shine the light on the secrets. This is one of the most intense investigations Gamache has lead as the secrets go deeper and deeper. Will the villagers act to protect Gamache and their village from the bad guys? Will the bad guys meet their match in Ruth? A brilliant balance between modern, big city intrigue and bucolic, small village happenings, this mystery novel is an absorbing read. Grit meets charm.

Canadian author Louise Penny has so far written nine stories in this series. The first four, labeled "Three Pines Mysteries," were well written, homey whodunits set in a small town in Canada and solved by Chief Inspector Gamache and his sidekick Inspector Jean-Guy Beauvoir of the Surete du Quebec. By the time Book 5, "The Brutal Telling" (often referred to as Penny's breakout novel) came out, the cover label had changed to "A Chief Inspector Gamache Novel." Book 6, "Bury Your Dead" opens with the news that in the interim between the "Brutal" and "Bury" books, something horrendous had happened that left many of Gamache's men dead and both Gamache and Beauvoir seriously injured and emotionally ravaged. The emotional and physical impact of that tragedy will follow the two detectives relentlessly through all the Gamache novels that follow. Which is why I recommend newbies read "Bury Your Dead," "A Trick of the Light," and "The Beautiful Mystery" before tackling this one. By the time we get to this ninth in the series, the bad apples, led by the villainous Chief Inspector Francoeur, will have taken over control of the Surete from Gamache and the good guys; the Francoeur faction will have grabbed away all of Gamache's best detectives--including Beauvoir--and are blatantly plotting to force Gamache's resignation. While all this is going on, there's a murder to be solved. Gamache has been called to Three Pines, where Myrna, the bookstore owner, needs his help finding her missing friend Constance, who, it will turn out, was (a) murdered and (b) the last of Canada's famous Ouellet quintuplets. In recent years I've

read all the Gamache books as soon as they come out...

...Louise Penny's new novel, "How the Light Gets In", is probably going to make my Top 10 novels of 2013. Reading it was like listening to a beautifully-crafted work by Mozart. On the other hand, the musicians playing the Mozart and Penny in writing "Light" have struck a few slightly "off" notes. So, how do I reconcile the "off" notes to a five-star book rating? It's difficult, but I'll try. "How the Light Gets In" is the ninth book in Louise Penny's Inspector Gamache series. I discovered the series only last year when I read the previous book "The Beautiful Mystery". I was so impressed with that book that I read six of the seven of her back-list. Most of the previous books were set in both Montreal and in the village of Three Pines, a couple of hours out of the city. A secluded place, Three Pines, sort of seems like the villages depicted in Thomas Kinkade's Christmas scenes. It looks like an ethereal place but the small village has seen its share of murders. It is Three Pines again where the majority of the action occurs in "Light". Bad things are also occurring in Montreal, where wickedness, murder, and havoc threaten to arise at any point during the story. Oh, and "venality" makes an appearance, too. Louise Penny is an ambitious writer. Her books have a multitude of plots and characters and she juggles them both. How WELL you, the reader, feels she juggles them will determine if you enjoy this book. In "Light" she includes her Inspector Gamache and his family and aides at the Surete de Quebec, and his enemies. Also included are the townspeople of Three Pines - human and fowl - as well as a family of quintuplets, who are involved in the murder case Gamache is charged with solving. The only problem with this book are the couple of dropped plot-points and characters.

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