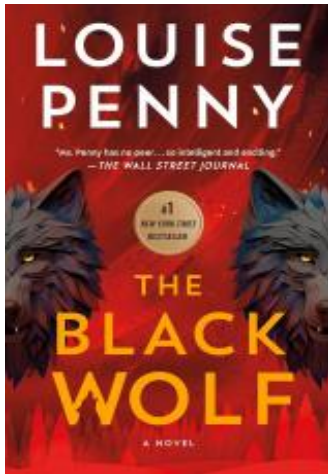


The Black Wolf

by Louise Penny



About the Book

The 20th mystery in the #1 New York Times bestselling Armand Gamache series.

Somewhere out there, in the darkness, a black wolf is feeding.

Several weeks ago, Chief Inspector Armand Gamache of the Sûreté du Québec and his team uncovered and stopped a domestic terrorist attack in Montréal, arresting the person behind it. A man they called the Black Wolf.

But their relief is short-lived. In a sickening turn of events, Gamache has realized that plot, as horrific as it was, was just the beginning. Perhaps even a deliberate misdirection. One he fell into. Something deeper and darker, more damaging, is planned. Did he in fact arrest the Black Wolf, or are they still out there? Armand is appalled to think that his mistake has allowed their conspiracy to grow, to gather supporters. To spread lies, manufacture enemies, and feed hatred and division.

Still recovering from wounds received in stopping the first attack, Armand is confined to the village of Three Pines, leading a covert investigation from there. He must be careful not to let the Black Wolf know he has recognized his mistake. In a quiet church basement, he and his senior agents, Beauvoir and Lacoste, pore over what little evidence they have. Two notebooks. A few mysterious numbers on a tattered map of Québec. And a phrase repeated by the person they had called the Grey Wolf. A warning.

In a dry and parched land where there is no water.

Gamache and his small team of supporters realize that for the Black Wolf to have gotten this far, they must have powerful allies, in law enforcement, in industry, in organized crime, in the halls of government.

From the apparent peace of his little village, Gamache finds himself playing a lethal game of cat and mouse with an

invisible foe who is gathering forces and preparing to strike.

Discussion Guide

1. We now know that THE GREY WOLF and THE BLACK WOLF are two parts of a whole. The last line of THE GREY WOLF and the first line of THE BLACK WOLF are the same: "We have a problem." Throughout THE BLACK WOLF, the nature of that problem is revealed. By the end of the novel, is it finally resolved? Why or why not?
2. Louise Penny leans into the feeling of anticipation in this novel. Clara Morrow works on a series titled *Just* before something happens. We learn about Snowflake Bentley, a photographer who captured snowflakes on film in the split second before something happened: they melted. What are some other examples of how Louise conveyed suspense --- that feeling of being in the moment before something happens --- in THE BLACK WOLF?
3. When we first find Armand Gamache in THE BLACK WOLF, he's dealing with the hearing loss he sustained in THE GREY WOLF, the "scream of the millions of cicadas nesting in his head." Although his hearing gradually returns throughout this novel, there are moments when he plays up his injuries, hoping to be underestimated. Why does he do this? Do you agree with his methods? Have you ever done anything similar?
4. On the village green, Ruth says to Reine-Marie: "Remember, Napoleon is always right," a quote from the novella ANIMAL FARM by George Orwell (or *Animal House*, if you ask Reine-Marie). What does Ruth mean by this quote? Have you read ANIMAL FARM? Are there any parallels between the two stories?
5. Secret communication via private domains on the dark web is integral to the plot of the novel. If you had to create a web domain for private communication between the members of your book group, what word would you choose? Why?
6. "What could be worse, Armand, than a person not getting what they most want?" former Deputy Prime Minister Marcus Lauzon asks Armand over lunch at the Gamache home. The answer, as we find out, is a person losing what they already have. Why is that worse? What did each character in THE BLACK WOLF want the most? Who got what they wanted? Who lost what they had? Have you?
7. "You remember Yvette Nichol. Agent Nichol is here to help," Armand Gamache says to Jean-Guy Beauvoir early in the novel. "That'll be a first," mutters Beauvoir. What did you remember of Agent Nichol from previous books? What did you think of her actions in the story? Did your opinion of her change?
8. Some important scenes in the novel take place at the Haskell Free Library and Opera House --- a venue located in both the US and Canada simultaneously --- where a production of the Canadian musical *Billy Bishop Goes to War* is playing. Have you heard of the Haskell Free Library? What about the musical? Did you find any parallels between the lyrics of the show and the events of the book?
9. "But where else would you hide a truth except among a bunch of lies?" Paul Workman says to the head of Reuters North America at the Queen Mother Café in Toronto. What does he mean by this? How does the reporting done by Workman and his protégée, Shona Dorion, contribute to the events that unfold in THE BLACK WOLF?

10. In her acknowledgments, Louise notes that the plot of *THE BLACK WOLF* is “hauntingly similar to real life.” Discuss some of the similarities between the events of *THE BLACK WOLF* and today’s news stories. What about the plot did you find plausible? What didn’t you? What happens when the water runs out?

Author Bio

Louise Penny is the multi-award winning author of the Chief Inspector Gamache novels, set in her home province of Québec, Canada. Her books, including *STATE OF TERROR* written with Hillary Rodham Clinton, have sold more than 18 million copies worldwide, topped international bestseller lists, including the *New York Times*, and been translated into 32 languages.

The recipient of both the Order of Canada and l’Ordre national du Québec, her country’s highest civilian honours, her Three Pines Foundation reaches out to those in crisis and offers financial and emotional support, with a special focus on literacy as well as dementia care. Her husband, Michael, died of dementia in 2016. She lives with her Golden Retriever Muggins in a village south of Montréal.

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