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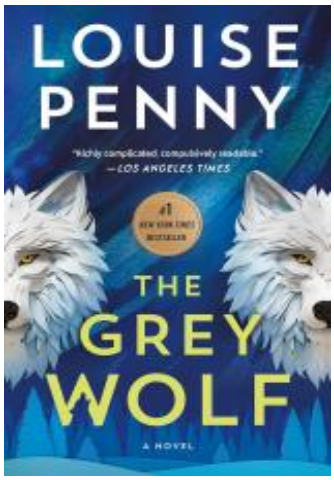
The Grey Wolf

by Louise Penny



About the Book

The 19th mystery in the #1 *New York Times* bestselling Armand Gamache series.

Relentless phone calls interrupt the peace of a warm August morning in Three Pines. Though the tiny Québec village is impossible to find on any map, someone has managed to track down Armand Gamache, head of homicide at the Sûreté, as he sits with his wife in their back garden. Reine-Marie watches with increasing unease as her husband refuses to pick up, though he clearly knows who is on the other end. When he finally answers, his rage shatters the calm of their quiet Sunday morning.

That's only the first in a sequence of strange events that begin THE GREY WOLF, the 19th novel in Louise Penny's #1 *New York Times* bestselling series. A missing coat, an intruder alarm, a note for Gamache reading "this might interest you," a puzzling scrap of paper with a mysterious list --- and then a murder. All propel Chief Inspector Gamache and his team toward a terrible realization. Something much more sinister than any one murder or any one case is fast approaching.

Armand Gamache, Jean-Guy Beauvoir, his son-in-law and second in command, and Inspector Isabelle Lacoste can only trust each other, as old friends begin to act like enemies, and long-time enemies appear to be friends. Determined to track down the threat before it becomes a reality, their pursuit takes them across Québec and across borders. Their hunt grows increasingly desperate, even frantic, as the enormity of the creature they?re chasing becomes clear. If they fail, the devastating consequences would reach into the largest of cities and the smallest of villages.

Including Three Pines.

Discussion Guide

1. When Armand Gamache first meets Charles, he makes a note of his accent: joual, a language that is ?guttural, almost harsh. If a Québec winter could speak, it would be in joual,? Armand thinks to himself. After hearing the accent, Gamache feels an instinctive trust for the stranger. Should Gamache have trusted Charles at their first meeting? Would you? Have you had a similar experience, liking or trusting someone because they remind you of something from your upbringing or background?

2. Gamache and Charles meet for coffee at a place called Café Olimpico, which became known to locals as ?Open Da Night? when some letters fell off its sign and never replaced. Visitors from outside the neighborhood would not know the cafe by its nickname. Do you have an insiders-only place like Open Da Night where you live? Can you think of any other examples of this type of place in Louise Penny?s books?

3. After the incident with the SUV at Open Da Night, Gamache notices onlookers taking out their phones to record and post. Louise writes that those filming had a right to take video, but Gamache wonders if they realized that ?with every second they posted, they lost pieces of their humanity.? Do you agree with Gamache? What do you think you would do if you found yourself in a similar situation?

4. In Chapter 15, Gamache wakes up a sleeping Olivier to question him about a guest at the Inn. ?What I wouldn?t give to spend just five minutes in his head,? Olivier says about Gabri, who sleeps through the interaction. ?I think it must smell of fresh baking in there.? Gamache thinks about how the inside of Reine-Marie?s head would smell like roses, Jean-Guy?s of bacon, Clara?s of oil paints and overripe banana. What do you think the inside of Gamache?s head would smell like? What about yours?

5. A torn recipe for Chartreuse, an herbal liqueur made by Carthusian monks, takes Gamache and his fellow Sûreté officers on an investigation into a number of different monasteries and religious orders throughout THE GREY WOLF. Have you ever tried Chartreuse? What did you think? Did you learn anything about monks in the novel that surprised you?

6. Although Gamache knows that everyone in Montréal would be in grave danger if the attack on the water supply is carried out, he does not sound the alarm to the public. What do you think of his decision to keep the plot to himself? Would you do the same thing?

7. In Chapter 31, Louise writes that there was ?a fine line between helping and unintentionally lighting a fuse that could not be stopped.? What does she mean by this? Who might she be referring to with this statement?

8. At Saint-Gilbert-Entre-les-Loups, Gamache tells Jean-Guy a story that Dom Philippe had told him years earlier, about a Cree elder and his grandson. The grandfather tells his grandson that there are two wolves at war inside of him at all times, a grey wolf --- wise and courageous --- and a black wolf, vengeful and cruel. When the boy asks his grandfather which one will win, the grandfather says, simply, ?the one that I feed.? Who is the grey wolf in this novel? Who is the black wolf? Are you sure?

9. Because of her actions many decades before the events of this book, the Gamaches and Jeanne Caron have a very difficult relationship. Although Jeanne Caron saves Armand?s life by the end of THE GREY WOLF, Reine-Marie cannot bring herself to forgive her because of what Caron did to their son. Do you think Reine-Marie?s continued rage is justified? Would you be able to forgive?

10. When we think of the settings of Louise?s books, we tend to envision the comfortable surroundings of Three Pines, of home. But THE GREY WOLF takes us far from home, from Montréal to DC, Paris to Rome, and many remote locations in between. How do all of these different locations affect the tone of the novel? How do they move the story forward? How do you feel about the books exploring different locations?

11. Louise references a line from the T. S. Eliot play *Murder in the Cathedral* throughout the novel: ?Some malady is coming upon us. We wait. We wait.? What is the ?malady? in THE GREY WOLF? What are the characters waiting for?

12. While the imminent threat of the attack on the water supply is resolved by the end of the novel, THE GREY WOLF ends on a cliffhanger: ?We have a problem.? What do you predict is the ?problem? that Gamache finds in the pages of the second notebook?

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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