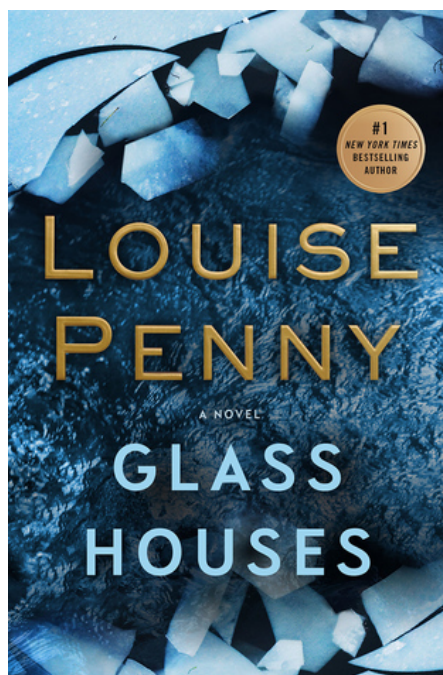




Glass Houses

Louise Penny

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When a mysterious figure appears in Three Pines one cold November day, Armand Gamache and the rest of the villagers are at first curious. Then wary. Through rain and sleet, the figure stands unmoving, staring ahead.

From the moment its shadow falls over the village, Gamache, now Chief Superintendent of the Surete du Quebec, suspects the creature has deep roots and a dark purpose. Yet he does nothing. What can he do? Only watch and wait. And hope his mounting fears are not realized.

But when the figure vanishes overnight and a body is discovered, it falls to Gamache to discover if a debt has been paid or levied.

Months later, on a steamy July day as the trial for the accused begins in Montreal, Chief Superintendent Gamache continues to struggle with actions he set in motion that bitter November, from which there is no going back. More than the accused is on trial. Gamache's own conscience is standing in judgment.

In *Glass Houses*, her latest utterly gripping book, number-one *New York Times* bestselling author Louise Penny shatters the conventions of the crime novel to explore what Gandhi called the court of conscience. A court that supersedes all others.

Glass Houses Details

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Author : Louise Penny

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From Reader Review Glass Houses for online ebook

Linda says

No murder. No Gamache.

The Cobrador: A tall, hooded figure robed in the midnight hour of black takes its position in the village center of Three Pines. The chilled November wind swirls around this individual who neither moves nor gestures to another soul.

High in the Pyrenees in 1841 a cobrador's presence signified a debt to be collected. Who is the cobrador eyeing for the recompense of something owed? And is it in the vein of money due or a kettle of moral debt never repaid?

Armand Gamache, Chief Inspector of the Surete du Quebec, is seated among his friends in the quiet window area of the cafe. He's already been out to confront the dark forboding figure who stands erect and wordless. No crime committed. No reason for arrest. At least, not today.

But when Reine-Marie Gamache, Armand's wife, discovers a body in the church basement, the village is met with a tidal wave of accusations that hit the wall over and over again. Who is responsible and does the trail lead to the cobrador? Is anyone safe from the guilt laid upon them for what they perceive as their own debts?

Louise Penny has more incredible story frames locked within her mind than there are grapes in the Tuscany countryside. Once again, she gathers the familiar Three Pines' hearts and brings them together entwined in a plot of murder, guilt, familiarity, historic trails, and the pursuit of law against the lawless.

Penny sets this stage with quite an original flavor. The story opens with Gamache on the stand in the heat of July being endlessly questioned about the murder that took place the previous November. We, the readers, do not know the individual held for this heinous act. She also weaves a secondary level of intrigue with Gamache and his son-in-law, Jean-Guy, monitoring a heavy duty drug bust involving the sale of opioids. The endless battle with drugs is one that forces Gamache to look into the dark eyes of nearing defeat. "Admitting you are afraid takes courage."

If you are a long time fan of the Gamache series or even if you have newly arrived, please savor Penny's words in the Author's Note. Her previous book, A Great Reckoning, is my favorite of all. But oh, dear reader, this one sits right alongside it. Louise Penny knows how to touch your inner spirit....because she's been there and continues to leave a lasting imprint that is timeless.

I received a copy of Glass Houses through NetGalley for an honest review. My sincere appreciation to Minotaur Books and to Louise Penny for the opportunity.

Jaline says

"There is a higher court than courts of justice and that is the court of conscience. It supersedes all other courts." ~Gandhi

In this 13th book of Louise Penny's "Inspector Gamache" series, the peaceful village of Three Pines is being threatened by something menacing. A tall figure stands still and silent in the village square wearing a black

robe and black mask. Menacing just by virtue of its dark presence, like a personification of Death itself.

The stories of the cobrador of Spain tell of a person wearing dark clothing and a top hat following a debtor around until they are shamed into paying what is owed. The author adds a dimension to this and the figure in this story becomes one of Conscience rather than debt. A reminder that we all have, or should have, a conscience to guide us toward right action.

A group of friends is on their annual visit to the village and one of them is murdered. The majority of this well-paced novel unfolds during the trial of the murderer with flash backs to actual events elaborating on Chief Superintendent Gamache's testimony in response to the Crown Prosecutor's questions.

Armand Gamache is now the head of the entire Surete and in his capacity of Chief Superintendent he has launched a final battle strategy in the war on crime - specifically the drug cartels whose products directly feed into almost all other crimes. The risks he is taking are huge and there are no guarantees that things will work out according to plan.

This is one of Louise Penny's best novels in the series so far – and that is saying something, as I have loved every one of them!

Paula Kalin says

What a disappointment. I've enjoyed this series from the start but the last two books have been so far fetched. The previous book was about the small town, Three Pines, finding a huge war cannon in their forest, and Glass Houses, is about conscience. I dislike it when a series goes way off the mark and steers into different territory. I just want to read about a good old murder and listen to Gamache quote some poetry.

3 out of 5 stars.

Lo9man88 says

I didn't think i could be surprised by our dear author again, but my God was i surprised and nicely so ; Gamache crossed a big line ! Our beloved police chief applied the famous saying that "the end justifies the means" by letting thousands of people die in order to draw the evil to him and cut his head so to speak , it was a huge gamble for him: everyone was turning against him and the popo ... It was an incredible story and as always three pines is at the center of it ... A very suspenseful tale, flash-back style

On a sad note my deepest sympathy to Ms P : **may your husband find peace in the afterlife.**

Kevin says

I was so very excited when I found this book on my holds shelf at the library. I ran through the first 100 pages and then found my lovely wife was diagnosed with breast cancer. I couldn't find the time nor the desire to pick up this book, I believe because I almost felt guilty reading this brilliance while my wife suffered through surgeries and then started chemo. I travelled this past week for work and enjoyed this book like the rest of Penny's masterpieces. I've paid a month's late fees (I should have just bought the book)! I am definitely on the short list of Louise Penny's best fans! Truly she is brilliant and her books are works of

art!

The good news is my wife caught her breast cancer early and after a crappy year her prognosis will look great.

Laura Hill says

In this installment of the Inspector Gamache series, he tackles the drug cartels and the fentanyl crisis (which we are reminded frequently kills 50 people for every kilo sold) all out of the seemingly peaceful sanctity of Three Pines. Meanwhile, a disturbing, hooded figure takes up residence on the Village Green and silently stares, bringing a sense of forboding to the sleepy town. Modeled after a Cobrador, or Conscience with a capital C, everyone in the Village feels certain it has come for them.

This is a hard review to write. I'm a huge Louise Penny fan - I loved the first 11 books in the Inspector Gamache series and eagerly preordered the 12th, pouncing on it as soon as it arrived. Perhaps those high expectations are part of why I found this book so absolutely dreadful. Had it been any other author I would have stopped reading after the first couple of chapters. The writing is simply bad. It reads like a first draft. Characters that I loved, that had wonderful depth in previous books, have become caricatures of themselves. I literally do not like these people any more.

The structure is a big part of the problem. The book opens at the murder trial with Gamache on the witness stand. We don't find out who was actually murdered until 50% of the way through the book. It is 75% of the way through the book before we find out who the accused murderer is. There is very little action (until the very end) and the dramatic tension is maintained not by what is happening but by what we as readers aren't told. Multiple chapters end with Gamache and Beauvoir looking at a new piece of startling information and exchanging serious looks - but the reader isn't let in on the secret. About 60% of the book alternates between repetitious hand-wringing (about the drug crisis, the scary guy on the green, or Gamache's approach (or apparent lack of approach) to solving the problem) and bland filler about food and drink (and by the way, for a novel focussed on how terrible the drug crisis is, our heroes drink A LOT!). That is just sloppy writing!

The last chapters in the book, where the action finally comes to a head, reminds me of the old Louise Penny. I enjoyed reading that, but it in no way made up for the hours I spent slogging through the rest. I know that Ms Penny's husband died, and I know that writing was her escape during a very, very, difficult time and I feel bad giving it a bad review, but I can't pretend something is good when it is really very, very bad! I wish she had gone back and done some editing before releasing. I will certainly give her the benefit of the doubt and give the next book (if there is a next book) a try, but this book was truly awful.

I really don't understand why so many people rated this so highly!

Lori says

I'm attached to this series. I like the Three Pines and Sûreté du Québec regulars.

I know, a drunken old poet, an untidy artist, a charming gay couple that run a B&B. Just don't tell the cliché police. Ruth and the Archangels were great.

Like a lot of good readers, I was as interested in Louise Penny's personal loss as her latest novel. Still Life

came out in 2005, but I feel like I've known her longer.

Whitehead, (Dr.) Victor Michael B.A., M.A., M.D.C.M., C.S.P.Q., F.R.C.P.C (born April 10, 1934), was called to Glory on September 18, 2016, after a breathtakingly, achingly valiant and dignified battle with dementia. He died at home, surrounded by all the love he'd given to others in his 82 years. Predeceased by his parents, George Victor and Doris (Jack), his brother Edward and sister Carol (Lloyd-Jones), and his first wife, Sheilagh (Ryan). Michael leaves behind his wife Louise (Penny), his sons, Michael, Richard (Kathy) and Victor, two grandchildren and countless friends...

<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/sher...>

Margitte says

SUMMARY

It was the month of November. Conscience, the Cobrador, entered Three Pines, and with the unseemly rainy, sleety weather for days, which seemed to seep right through the clothing, skin and pooled in the bones, quarrels broke out in the bistro over trivial things. They haven't seen the sun for days, felt like weeks, months, perhaps forever. Guests and inhabitants alike were stressed, the nerves frayed, tempers short.

Someone in Three Pines did something so horrific that a Conscience had to be called. He was standing there on the village green, not moving, talking, or budging. *"No man is as bad as the worst thing he has done."*

Then someone died and Chief Superintendent Inspector Armand Gamache, head of the Sûreté du Québec had to relate the events in court to the young new judge Maureen Corriveau. It was her first homicide case. People were nervous, and Conscience stood witness to the proceedings. The murderer was already known. The pompous Crown, Barry Zalmanowitz, made it his mission to grind Gamache into the woodwork as though he was the defendant instead of a witness.

It was not a cut and dry case at all. *Buddhists or Toaists said that there are certain people we meet time and time again, in different lifetimes.* Take for instance the resident poet Ruth with her doppelgänger, Rosa the duck. The duck might have been her child in a past life. The more time passes, the more they looked the same. Ruth, with her potty mouth and the duck that reply *fuck fuck fuck* to everything that comes out of Ruth's mouth.

And then there was the issue of Cobradores del frac from ancient Spanish times, that might have passed from the Old World into the New World, into the beloved Three Pines residence's world. We all know the residents so well: Clara Morrow, the hugely successful portrait artist; Dr. Myrna Landers, the retired psychologist and now owner of The New And Used Bookstore right next to the Bistro; Gabri Dubeau, who ran the local B&B with his partner Olivier; Katie and Patrick Evans, the contractor and his architect wife who build glass houses; Jacqueline and Sarah from the bakery (in her world a good baguette was a magic wand that solved all problems); Anton, the new dishwasher and bus at the bistro; guests Matheo Bissonette and his wife Lea Roux, the member of the National Assembly, old friends of the Evanses; and the rest of Three Pines.

It all became weird with that Halloween party in the Bistro, when Gamache thought the person in the black costume looked like Death...

In the ensuing court case, Gamache had to maneuver through the collusion between magic and reality to conclude the events that shook the small Canadian village. Still the murder capital of Canada. Now Armand and his wife Reine-Marie were permanent residence as well. In his quest for peace and quiet, trying to escape the vile, the tragic and the terrifying world of crime, Gamache became more than just the chief of police. He became one of them. And sometimes being a friend, and being a policeman might not gel. Things could fall in place or fall apart this time, especially when he discovered that all drug smuggling routes converged in this village which did not even appear on a map. He was determined to strike a decisive, hard, fast, effective blow right at the heart. He did not believe in a small series of small irritant blows. For this he waited and waited and waited for the right moment...and then the dark figure appeared on the sleet-slashed village green...

They would all have their day in court for what happened next ...

COMMENTS

The author finally defined what made us all so addicted to Three Pines. We all threatened to leave everything and move to Three Pines, Canada. Millions of us want to be part of this unknown, fictitious village with its unique characters.

"Three Pines is a state of mind." she says, " When we choose tolerance over hate. Kindness over cruelty. Goodness over bullying. When we choose to be hopeful, not cynical."

We constantly come back for more of the same. It was a perfect read just before Christmas: a dollop of reality, a big pinch of imagination, mixed with friendship, serious issues and excellent penmanship. Even though it lacked that WOW factor of an excellent murder mystery, felt somewhat contrived, and was not up to par with Penny's previous books, the story did address our need to belong to something, some place better within our own little troubled worlds. There was enough action, mystery and adventure to stick to it if you read it in increments like I did in a very busy holiday season. I was not overly excited about the cliffhanger ending, but there was enough of a denouement to close the book with a song in the heart. I had a Three Pine fix again.

The author wrote this book during her husband's final days and passing. Needless to say, she did a good job despite the difficult time she had to go through. My sincere condolences to her. Louise Penny always add that personal touch to her writing, involving her readers in her stories and her life. It was once again evident in this book. I think it is the reason why we are such devoted followers, even though we might feel annoyed from time to time.

I wish her well. And for all my GR friends, a happy, peaceful season filled with goodness, grace and good memories.

Cathrine ?? says

5 ? ? ? ? ?

So you're a fan and you're starting to get stressed.

How much longer can the author keep our hero sustainable?

Or perhaps you're superstitious and thinking #13 could mean bad luck rather than a baker's dozen.

How many murders can one small town suffer?

How many times can you enjoy a cafe au lait with a warm croissant dripping butter?

I know.

As long as she keeps writing we will continue to turn the pages and be hungry.

This one was exceptional, the best one yet; she's taken it to a higher level—a higher love. There was so much goodness inside, if it was a restaurant it would be awarded 3 Michelin stars. It even made me cry and that happens about as often as Ruth Zardo handing out a compliment. Rest easy fans. In Three Pines the woods are lovely, dark and deep, and Armand Gamache has miles to go before he sleeps.

Merci Louise Penny. You are a wonder woman of an author.
Thanks also Minotaur Books & NetGalley for this ARC.

JanB says

It pains me to do this, as this is one of my favorite series, but I can't give it more than 2.5 stars (fair).

With a new Penny book I settle in to spend time with my favorite characters in the quaint village of Three Pines. The books have always been as much of a character study as a mystery, and it's one of the things I've loved about the series.

Unfortunately, this one just didn't work for me. I didn't care for the opioid epidemic theme, and although the book opens with a murder trial, the victim isn't identified until well past 50%. I thought the constant switching from past to present, with the reader being kept in the dark, slowed things down to a crawl.

The quirky and lovable characters, as well as the cozy atmosphere in Three Pines, are missing. Even Gamache isn't his typical self, he's too full of angst and rather insufferable. The tone of the entire book just felt off. The other inhabitants of the village, especially Ruth, are in danger of becoming caricatures of their former selves.

There are several alternating story lines and the author does a fine job eventually merging them. The last 20% of the book was very enjoyable and was a reminder just what the residents of the village mean to one another. It was strong enough that I rounded my rating up.

I hope the next book brings us back to the Three Pines I know and love. The epilogue was heartfelt and touching, and was my favorite part of the book. Penny's husband, Michael, died from complications of Alzheimer's and writing this book was therapeutic for her. She has my sincere sympathy.

* many thanks to Netgalley and St. Martin's Press for a copy of the book in exchange for an honest review.

Liz says

It's All Saints Day and a person robed all in black appears in the center of Three Pines. Speaking to no one, he just stands. What is he meant to represent?

Penny's work is always convoluted. This time, maybe more than previously. Scenes flip back and forth between a court case where you don't even know the defendant is and the time leading forward from the figure arriving in Three Pines.

This isn't just about a murder though. Gamache, in his new role as chief Superintendent of the Surete, is

going after the major drug cartel in Quebec. He's playing a very dangerous game, trying to win the war, not the small battles.

The writing, as always, is perfect. Her mysteries are deeper than most. There's always a bit of philosophy at work. The biggest question is always why a murder was committed, not who committed it. And here, there's the added question of how things will play out against the drug cartel and what will be the cost.

I love returning to these characters; getting to know them a little better each time. I adore Ruth and Rosa, but each one is fully three dimensional. Make sure to read the author's note at the end.

An enjoyable, engrossing read.

Diane S ? says

The less said the better since I don't want to give anything away, so my review will be very brief. I will say fans of this series will not be disappointed, this one may well be the best so far. A hard thing to accomplish in series of this length. Gamache will put everything on the line. Something old will be mixed with a current scourge in many countries, has reached epidemic proportions, and is hurting and has hurt many. Ruth, my favorite, and her duck get a somewhat larger role and more of her poetry is quoted. It will all come down to who did what where and who knew what when. So, so good, very suspenseful and as always the characters of Three Pines will pull together. There is after all a great deal of love in this little town and a great deal of good. Remember to read the afterward, it is poignant and awe inspiring.

ARC from Netgalley.

Publishes August 29th by St. Martin's Press.

Phrynnne says

I am going to give this one five stars. Out of the thirteen books so far in this series this has to be one of the best.

Since the last book Armand Gamache has moved on to higher things and now he is Chief Superintendent of the Quebec police. Glass Houses commences in court with Armand giving evidence against an accused murderer. In Penny's usual fashion she makes the reader wait for most of the book to find out who this murderer is. In fact we spend a lot of the time in the dark as Penny and Gamache dole out information in tiny increments.

The story is excellent and all of our favourite characters appear at some point. Ruth and Reine Marie have larger roles than usual, but Rosa only gets to say her usual one word. The ending is huge and the repercussions may be very interesting. We will have to wait until the next book to find out.

Esil says

4.5 stars rounded up to 5 stars.

It's that time of year again, Armand. Labour Day weekend, and we get to spend a couple of days together...

Last year, I went gaga over Louise Penny's annual dose of Armand Gamache and the folks in Three Pines. This year's fare was lovely, but I can't quite give it five stars because I didn't love the end. But, still, I remain a true fan, wishing I could stumble onto the village of Three Pines, have a croissant and cafe au lait at the bistro while meeting my favourite characters and trying not to blush when shaking Armand's hand -- and trying to keep out of death's path.

I absolutely loved the set up of this year's book. Starting in a court room in Montreal, with Armand as a witness, Penny depicts the minutiae of a trial dealing with a murder that took place several months earlier -- I love good courtroom dramas so this aspect of the book was a real treat for me. The story moves back and forth in time from the appearance of a strange dark figure in Three Pines, slowly revealing what happened after its appearance, while connecting those events to the tension of the trial in Montreal. The dark figure turns out to be a brilliant device. And Penny introduces a new character I really enjoyed -- Maureen Corriveau who is the judge presiding over the trial.

I can't say more about the plot because the way in which this one unfolds is masterful and it would be a shame to ruin the effect. I will only say that the only part I didn't love was how the end gets resolved. But my enthusiasm for this series is not in the least diminished. I continue to be awed by how Penny mixes great characters with interesting and important issues, always engaging my emotions, intellect and moral compass.

And, again this year, Penny managed to make me teary with her afterword. Her husband, Michael who is the model for Armand's personality, died of complications from Alzheimer's in September last year. She talks about him with such grace and love. I am awed that she was able to complete this book while grieving, and appreciate that writing is her escape.

So, Armand, I feel the fall coming. School starts tomorrow. It's Labour Day. It feels like it's time to pull my socks up and get back into the busy rhythm of work and home life. It's time to part once more. Thanks again for allowing me to spend time with you and your family in Three Pines this weekend. You've recharged my batteries. I'll see you next year, and in the meantime please make sure to get into more interesting trouble while keeping safe...

Sigh...

Brenda says

I was disappointed in the first half of this book. There are strangers in Three Pines. Anton is a dishwasher working in the bistro, and Jacqueline works in the boulangerie even though her talent does not include making baguettes. There are also two married couples, including Lea who has known Myrna since childhood. They have annually visited Three Pines for a few years. This will not be the wonderful visit with old friends that I expect.

There is a Cobrador, a masked, black-robed and -hooded figure standing on the village green hour after hour, day after day. Chief Inspector Armand Gamache says the figure is doing nothing illegal. The villagers are nervous and afraid, and children are not outside playing. A mob threatens the figure. Then a body is found. All this makes me feel unsettled. What is happening to this quaint little village?

Gamache sits in a witness box testifying for the prosecution in a murder case, yet he and the Chief Crown Prosecutor seem to be adversaries. There is some grand plan, something going on that's not quite right. Everything feels vague, shrouded in secrecy, and I'm not privy to very much.

So, yes, it's fair to say I was not a happy reader. The writing felt choppy with too many short, incomplete sentences. Phrases really. Words. That began to irritate me a bit. I was even getting irritated with Rosa the duck, fer cryin' out loud! I asked the author, "Who are you, and what have you done with Louise Penny?" Then Penny picks up the pace and hits her stride in the second half. The final 15% was speed-reading! I don't think this is Louise Penny at her best. I knew and understand her circumstances as she spells them out in her Acknowledgment. My conclusion: Not a 5, but not a 3, either. Still one of my favorite authors and series.
