



## A Great Reckoning

*Louise Penny*

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When an intricate old map is found stuffed into the walls of the bistro in Three Pines, it at first seems no more than a curiosity. But the closer the villagers look, the stranger it becomes.

Given to Armand Gamache as a gift the first day of his new job, the map eventually leads him to shattering secrets. To an old friend and older adversary. It leads the former Chief of Homicide for the Sûreté du Québec to places even he is afraid to go. But must.

And there he finds four young cadets in the Sûreté academy, and a dead professor. And, with the body, a copy of the old, odd map.

Everywhere Gamache turns, he sees Amelia Choquet, one of the cadets. Tattooed and pierced. Guarded and angry. Amelia is more likely to be found on the other side of a police line-up. And yet she is in the academy. A protégée of the murdered professor.

The focus of the investigation soon turns to Gamache himself and his mysterious relationship with Amelia, and his possible involvement in the crime. The frantic search for answers takes the investigators back to Three Pines and a stained glass window with its own horrific secrets.

For both Amelia Choquet and Armand Gamache, the time has come for a great reckoning.

#1 *New York Times* bestselling author Louise Penny pulls back the layers to reveal a brilliant and emotionally powerful truth in her latest spellbinding novel.

## A Great Reckoning Details

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## From Reader Review A Great Reckoning for online ebook

### Jim says

By the time you get to the 12th novel in a series I often find myself losing interest and that the stories just aren't as good as they were. Not with this series. If anything the series seems to get stronger. I feel like I know the characters and they could be friends. Louise Penny has a superb gift for describing scenes and people so that you feel like you are right there ... enjoying the food, sitting in front of a fire, and are part of the conversation. These are stories of relationships and morality. Stories of the human heart.

An old map is found stuffed into the walls of the bistro in Three Pines. At first it does not appear to be more than a curiosity. It is a hand made map, intricate, and contains strange icons such as a snowman and pyramid. Something for the residents to talk about in front of a fire on a cold Quebec night. The map is given to Armand Gamache as a gift the first day of his new job as Commander of the Sûreté academy. Armand had retired as Chief of Homicide for the Sûreté du Québec. He had come to Three Pines seeking sanctuary and to heal. But his love of the Sûreté is too strong and he agrees to take over the academy.

Armand gives copies of the map to four cadets as an investigative exercise. One of the cadets is Amelia Choquet. Tattooed, pierced and angry she would seem more likely to be in a police line-up than a police cadet. She had been rejected but one of Armand Gamache's first acts as Commander was to override the rejection. When one of the professors at the academy is found murdered and in his bedside table is one of the copies of the odd map there is a murder investigation naturally but because the murder occurred at the Sûreté academy an independent observer is brought in. The focus of the investigation soon turns to Gamache himself and his mysterious relationship with Amelia.

A mysterious map, corruption at the Sûreté academy ... and murder, a former friend and now adversary. A complex story about complex people and complex emotions. Weakness in the face of temptation, despair, forgiveness, and compassion. It is all here. As the famous introduction from The Shadow radio program says "Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men?"

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### DeB MaRtEnS says

It is always terrific to return to Three Pines, the neighbourly if eccentric cast and catch up with Armande Gamache and his family. Louise Penny has created a unique series, close to being "cozy" and driven by the Inspector's keen intelligence and compassionate soul. At the same time, the mysteries are intense and multi-layered, with unexpected solutions.

In the latest book in the series, Armande Gamache has accepted a job with the Police Training Academy. Le Sûreté has recovered from the corruption in its ranks, and after a short retirement Armand is ready to reach out to the next generation, leading to serve the people and giving the new recruits a different outlook from its earlier staffers.

Plans go awry. A simple search to find out more about a map puts four new police interns in precarious situations. A murder puts everyone under suspicion. In typical Penny style, it is the emotions and relationships which direct the way to the solution as well as round the story out with warmth.

I found the first part of the novel a bit slower moving than her earlier works - but it might be because I've been visited by a bad headcold and I'm the one who is dragging! The conclusion was excellent.

No Great Reckoning gets 4.5 stars

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### Paromjit says

This is a character driven mystery crime novel which engages the reader effortlessly. Louise Penny returns to Three Pines, and the eccentric, wonderful and comical characters that reside there. Armand Gamache, after almost dying in his efforts to cleanse the dirty cops in the Quebec Surete, has a new challenge in his life. He is the Commander of the Surete Training School for which his wife Reine-Marie is grateful as she imagines he will be safe. However, Armand's unenviable task is to root out the corruption and ugly practices that have in turn produced numerous brutal and cruel officers in the Surete.

Armand plays a dangerous game in dismissing and appointing staff in the expectation that there will be a conflagration. This would allow him to gather evidence for arrests to take place and to identify the powerful figure outside who has instigated the corruption. This backfires as he misjudges the depths of cruelty and brutality of the corrupt and arrogant Serge Leduc. Leduc is discovered dead in a carefully stage managed manner with the murder weapon, a revolver. Perceiving those cadets closest to Leduc to be in danger, Armand locates them to Three Pines with the task of investigating a mysterious map found in the walls of the Bistro. Overlooking Lacoste's investigation into the murder is Assistant Commissioner Gelinas of the RCMP who takes an inordinate interest in Armand. Questions are asked about the nature of the relationship Armand has with the unconventional but bright cadet, Amelia.

What really drives this novel are the characters in all their flawed depths and humanity. Armand is a towering figure who understands the strengths to be found in kindness and humanity. The complexities in relationships are what make this riveting reading. The village characters add charm and comic touches to the story. There is the bickering relationship of Olivier and Gabri, the cantankerous and querulous poet, Ruth, not to mention Clara, the artist and Myrna. The tale is peppered with wisdom coming from a number of quarters. The tragedies associated with the First World War at Three Pines add multiple layers to the book. It is beautifully plotted and an absorbing read. I would urge others to read this. Highly recommended and a superb read. Thanks to Little, Brown for an ARC.

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### Cathrine ?? says

#### 5★ Shining so brightly!

While the author was writing this 12th book in her Inspector Gamache series her husband was in the last stages of Alzheimer's disease and passed away shortly after its publication. In the acknowledgements she writes tenderly and lovingly about him and the many friends, neighbors, and colleagues whose help and emotional support were invaluable to her. That list included **“Armand, Reine-Marie, Clara, Myrna, Gabri, Ruth, et al.”**

Those of us who love this series can understand that very well. As soon as I picked it up and started reading it was as if I was on vacation visiting with beloved friends. I'm sure the love between Armand and Reine-Marie is inspired by what Ms. Penny shared with her husband Michael. But I wasn't expecting too much with this one as I was thinking after the last book that the inspector had seen his best days. But I'm always

thrilled to be back in Three Pines and not ready to see an end to the stories.

Well, what did I know. It was *excellent on so many levels* and now one of my favorites in the series. Inspired, deeply satisfying, and pure pleasure from beginning to end. I don't know how she keeps pulling it off but so very grateful she does. Gosh I loved this. It will be a hard act to follow for my next book, I almost feel sorry for the author.

Now the long wait for #13.

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### **Sandy \*The world could end while I was reading and I would never notice\* says**

Robert Bathurst does a great job of narrating Louise Penny's A Great Reckoning, #12 in The Chief Inspector Armand Gamache series.

This is only my second Louise Penny and I have to admit to being enamoured by Gamache's steely yet gentle personality, his sense of honour.

Central to this story is an old orienteering map discovered hidden in the wall of the old Bistro at Three Pines, a town that appears on no map other than this one.

This tale of murder is intricately wound with false trails and leads, misinformation and innuendo.

A delightful 'read'.

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### **Frances says**

3.5\*. Armand Gamache has recently taken over as the commander of the Sûreté Academy for the training of new cadets. He begins his new position by firing many of the inferior and no doubt corrupt Professors. But he keeps one on, the one suspected of fraud, kickbacks, and an unorthodox way of training the new cadets. Gamache is desperate to discover the evidence he needs to put this Professor behind bars for a very long time. However, things rarely go as planned and once a murder takes place everything changes. Gamache realizes he should bring in an outsider, and requests RCMP Deputy Commissioner Gelinas to oversee the investigation to ascertain everything discovered about the murder is above board. As the inquiry begins, Gamache is taken aback that Gelinas has promptly put him in his crosshairs and will no doubt arrest him for the crime once he is satisfied with the evidence. Louise Penny has introduced some rather quirky characters in A Great Reckoning; one who carries around a pet duck and swears like a sailor, along with a newly enrolled cadet who looks more like a criminal than someone on the right side of the law. It is a complex crime thriller with several suspects, including Gamache himself who many begin to suspect could have done the deed.

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### **Phrynette says**

In my review of the previous book in this series I wished that Armand Gamache would soon come out of

retirement and get back to what he is really good at - taking charge and solving crimes. I got my wish and after sifting through a number of offers for very senior positions Gamache chooses one nearest to his own heart as Commander of the Surete Academy.

Action in the book is divided between Three Pines and the Academy which made me happy. There is an interesting twist when Gamache himself is suspected of murder and a lot of emotions are aroused especially amongst all the friends in Three Pines. Then a number of people suspect him of something else altogether! Poor Armand certainly leaves himself open to suspicion as he plays his cards close to his chest and does not share his personal knowledge with anyone, including the reader.

This is a book that is hard to put down. The story is tense and mysterious and moves along at a great pace. As it approached the final page I thought we were never going to discover who Amelia really was. It was saved to the very last sentence.

A very special book written at a time when the author was going through an awful upheaval in her own life. Make a point of reading the Acknowledgements.

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### **?Karen says**

These books are so hard to review because no matter what I say, no matter how inconsequential it may seem, I don't want to give away anything at all that might be spoilerish for someone. As the title hints, some things that have gone unanswered are answered, about Three Pines' history especially. There's also a murder to solve, this time at the Sûreté academy, where Gamache has just started a new career. The murderer could be one of the cadets, a professor, or even Gamache himself. Anyone and everyone who happened to be at the Academy the night of the murder is suspect.

It's always good to spend some time with all my friends in Three Pines. I'm still not enthralled with the new audio narrator -- I really think he needs to give Armand a much stronger voice, to stand out from everyone else.

Au revoir .... Until we meet again.

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### **Sharron says**

Every time I read a title in this series, I think how could it possibly be better than the last, and yet it is. Penny writes with a depth of complexity that reaches out and draws the reader in.

In this latest title Gamache has taken his quest to clean up police corruption to its very beginning, the police academy. Where better to stop corruption than to prevent it from starting. It soon becomes clear that it won't be an easy task, old foes and forces are still at work.

When murder arrives at the academy, it will become necessary for Gamache and his team to delve into the past to solve the crimes of the present. Once again, we are reminded, as Gamache has said in the past, if we understand why, we will know who.

For anyone who hasn't read this series, start at the beginning, while the books can stand alone, the depth of storytelling is truly revealed through the evolution of the series.

This title is an extraordinary achievement, perhaps one of her best.

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### **Linda says**

"Things are strongest where they're broken," said Commander Gamache, his voice deep and calm and certain.

I must tell you.

I don't know where the magnitude of strength came from that propelled Louise Penny to write this most beautiful of life sonnets to her husband, Michael. She penned A Great Reckoning while her husband battled dementia. "Dementia is a marauder, a thief. But every hole it drills has been filled by our friends. By practical help and emotional support."

And her beloved character of Armand Gamache battles the corruption and evil nature of an old friend and also a long time adversary in the mix. Gamache draws his enemies closer by placing them in positions within the Surete Academy of which he is head. These professors have access to the young cadets and Gamache bides his time.

Louise Penny inserts intense complications as only she can. An old map of Three Pines has been found sealed up in a wall from the Great War and somehow it has a connection to a stained glass window in the church. Gamache assigns four cadets to unlock the mysteries of the map. One cadet, Amelia Choquet, tattooed and pierced and a highly unlikely new member of the academy, has been hand-picked by Gamache. For heaven's sake, why? And when one of the professors ends up dead with a copy of the map in his bedside table, all are under suspicion, including Gamache.

Those of you who have read many a novel in this series know that friendship and goodness are the fine threads that intertwine throughout her Inspector Armand Gamache series. Nothing has touched me more than this recent one. A Great Reckoning parallels itself to the world that we find ourselves living in.....the corruption, the deceit, the lies easily spoken, and the automaticity of hate-filled words.

But Louise Penny draws on Gamache's words: "There is always a road back. If we have the courage to look for it, and take it." Even in the midst of profound heartache, Louise Penny gifts us with the sweet touch of joy.

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### **Dana says**

This is one of the best books in the series! Now that I am caught up...I have to wait a year for the next book

to come out and return to one of my favorite spots, with my favorite characters, in Three Pines.

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### Diane S ? says

To say she has done it again is an understatement. I very seldom rate mysteries five stars but in this case it is well deserved. Gamache accepts a job as the head of the Surete, the school where cadets train. But why and what does he hope to accomplish there? Some of the most well known players from previous books return. There is a murder and a map, a new cadet with ties to Gamache. Three Pines is featured prominently in this one, the characters, the church. Old mystery, new mystery.

Louise Penny has such a winning combination in these books. The characters, I always wonder if I actually met Ruth if I would like her, and well all of them, all add something special. There is friendship, love, caring and cunning, loyalty and a very smart, wonderful man in charge. In this book I ran through a gambit of emotions, fear, wonder, laughter and yes, one part even brought me to tears. How many authors can accomplish this? Even some of the bad are more than just that. So I take away a very important point, "Don't believe everything you think." just love that quote. Also, make sure you read the acknowledgements, they are extremely heartfelt.

ARC from publisher.

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### Truman32 says

I love the Fall. It's the season where the weather is more moderate--better for running. Football starts. There's usually a new iPhone coming out, pumpkins can be found everywhere from front porch stoops to fancy coffee drinks, and it is the season where the new books from *my authors* (usually mystery series) are released.

Louise Penny is right on schedule this September with her newest Chief Inspector Armand Gamache mystery, **A Great Reckoning** and it's sensational. I can't say this series is underappreciated anymore seeing as how this book has ascended to the pinnacle of the bestseller lists, last week debuting at #1, but it still does not get near as much press as it should.

The Gamache books have always been a strange mixture of locked-room murder mystery and police procedural, mixed with a heaping helping of conspiracy, and laboriously garnished with a healthy amount of warmth and heart. And it works. Oh, it works quit well. Penny's accomplished writing brings everything together into a soufflé of exquisite sumptuousness.

In **A Great Reckoning**, Gamache now retired from investigating homicides for the Surete du Quebec, has taken the reins of an out of control police-training academy. His new goal is to weed out the corrupt administrators and professors who have infected the force. One particularly pernicious and sadistic weed, the creeping thistle who was previously the academy's original commander is found murdered with a bullet to the head and the chase is afoot. Meanwhile back in the cozy hamlet of Three Pines, home to Gamache and his friends, a mysterious map is discovered inside the wall of the local Bistro. It seems to be from around the time of World War 1. Is there a connection to this map and the murdered academy administrator?

Penny, historically the only Canadian author of note (not counting the esteemed memoirist and sci-fi guru William Shatner) has the skills to make many of the current crop of mystery writers nervous at being exposed as 5-cent hacks. If Penny's body is ever found in a deserted patch of Canadian woodlands and the Mounties label her death foul play, you will need only to look at the current crop of writers on the New York Bestseller list for your suspects. Penny's writing is funny, suspenseful, and warmer than the gravy on a recently delivered order of poutine. There is real humanity behind her characters and a goodness in humanity not found in the conspicuously jaded modern mystery titles found on the shelves at your local Barnes and Noble.

Any of the Armand Gamache books are good, but **A Great Reckoning** is wildly excellent. It's rich and poignant. There are moments you will want so badly to see how high pressure situations get resolved you must force yourself not to skip ahead, and moments of piercing pathos that you must remind yourself you are in a public area and you must not break down bawling. Great addition to the series and highly recommended.

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### **Esil says**

I had a really good time on our annual date, Armand. Either I'm old enough to find the familiar uplifting and comforting or maybe you're just really good at keeping things fresh and interesting. Whatever it is, this was definitely one of our best dates. I hope Reine Marie isn't too jealous...

At the end of every August, my consolation for seeing the end of the summer is that Louise Penny publishes a new mystery featuring Armand Gamache and the village of Three Pines. I love the series. I love the characters Penny has created and the familiar Quebec cultural setting with all of its bilingual complexities. It's a bit crazy, but as my husband and I were driving through the Eastern Townships earlier in August, I had this flitting thought that it would be lovely to stumble upon the village of Three Pines.

Anyways, I haven't liked each book in the series equally, but I must say that **A Great Reckoning** is definitely one of my favourites. It skilfully intertwines Gamache's complex history as a police officer with some great new characters and a compelling mystery. Gamache is now head of the police academy. The story focuses on the inner workings of this previously corrupt institution and Gamache's unconventional attempt to clean it up, and intertwines this context with the history of the mysterious village of Three Pines. I won't say more to avoid spoilers.

But I will note that I was all set to give this one a high 4 star rating, when I came across a tear inducing pitch perfect few paragraphs showing the deep love and relationship between Gamache and his wife of many years Reine Marie. It's hard not to link their relationship with Penny's own relationship with her husband Michael, who she has previous advised is her model for Gamache and who she mentions in the acknowledgements is now suffering from dementia. This passage really brought home Penny's unique skills at depicting complex human emotion. These books probably bear no relationship to what it really feels like to work in the provincial Quebec police force, but Penny sure knows how to use this context to stir up human emotions -- all the nasty ones and all the ones to aspire too.

Anyhow, if you're a fan, this is another great addition to the series. If your enthusiasm for the series has waned, it might be worth one more try. And if you haven't tried this series, it's definitely worth a try. These are not cozy mysteries nor are they particularly gritty or violent -- the series is very much its own intelligent character driven universe.

I ramble on uncharacteristically because I'm trying to prolong our time together, Armand. Sigh. See you next year. I already miss you.

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### **Brenda says**

I have read the previous 11 Armand Gamache books, and they all led to the events and revelations in this, the 12th. I felt like I was coming home as I started the book. I wanted to go slow and immerse myself in Three Pines, and I was successful until I had to know the secrets and I couldn't stop reading. Many people talk about certain books as if they were peeling away layers of an onion. To me, this story was like a rose, opening petal by petal.

Armand has found a new purpose as the Commander of the Sûreté Academy. The professional past has not completely healed, and he keeps on some professors and brings in new ones. Everything is done with a purpose, including accepting certain new students and befriending current cadets. And Armand must also face his personal past, including Michel Brébeuf with whom Armand had been blood brothers as boys and as men.

A Great Reckoning was an awesome story, possibly Louise Penny's best, but to appreciate all the characters and the story, I strongly urge readers to start at the beginning. You must experience Three Pines and the ambience and food in the bistro and the lives of Clara the artist, Myrna the bookseller, Gabri and Olivier the bistro owners, and Ruth the crusty poet. You must also learn the personal history of Armand, his wife Reine-Marie, his second in command Jean-Guy Beauvoir, and others of the Sûreté du Québec. There is still more to learn, I'm sure, and I can hardly wait.

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