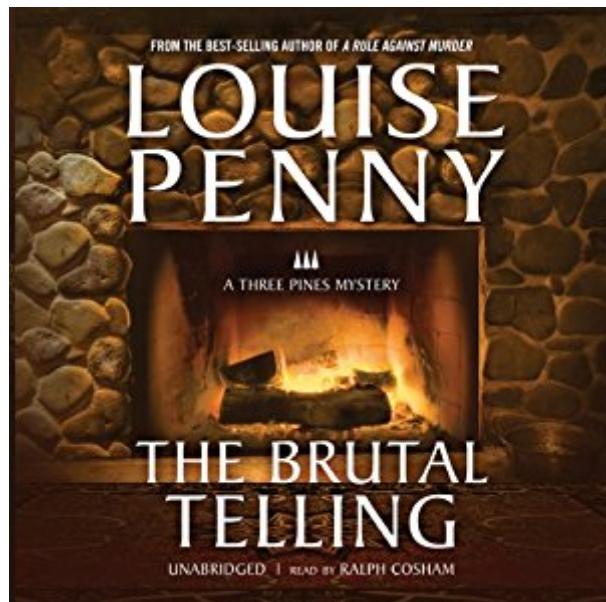


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The Brutal Telling: A Three Pines Mystery



Synopsis

Chaos is coming, old son. With those words the peace of Three Pines is shattered. As families prepare to head back to the city and children say goodbye to summer, a stranger is found murdered in the village bistro and antiques store. Once again, Chief Inspector Gamache and his team are called in to strip back layers of lies -- exposing both treasures and rancid secrets buried in the wilderness. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"The Brutal Telling" by Louise Penny is as much literary saga as mystery. As with any good saga the residents of the Canadian village of Three Pines are both fascinating and alive as they go about their daily lives that flow among the shops and houses surrounding the village green. As with any good mystery, the reader quickly becomes a participant in solving the crime at hand. Featuring Chief Inspector Armand Gamache and his homicide team for the Sûreté du Québec, this fifth and latest entry in the Three Pines series meets and exceeds expectations set by previous books. The first chapter of this tale opens deep in the forest where we overhear a conversation between a man identified only as "The Hermit" and a man called Olivier. The tone carries hints of fantasy and the forest primeval as The Hermit warns, "Chaos is here, old son." There is an immediate sense of isolation and fear. The story then quickly shifts to the village and the discovery of the body in the village Bistro, a body recognized only by the Bistro's owner Olivier, who chooses to keep his knowledge of The Hermit to himself. Enter Chief Inspector Gamache and the hunt is on. Who is the dead man? Where was he killed and why? Who is telling the truth and who is lying? Who

amongst them is a murderer?"The Brutal Telling" stands out from the standard issue police procedural because, intertwined with the familiar workings of the murder investigation, are bits of poetry, art, and culinary magic. There is also history, philosophy, psychology, and wisdom woven into a tapestry that feels both ancient and new. Readers new to the series will be as delighted as those returning. This is a place where you want to linger and wander about.

A synopsis of this novel's plot and action has been covered in many of the reviews to date, so I won't bore readers with a repeat of those details. Rather I would like to address the many fans of Louis Penny's Three Pines series. This is the fifth book in the series and I, like so many other readers, devoured the first four with gusto, falling in love with Three Pines and it's wonderful, albeit quirky, residents. Thus it was good news to have a fifth book in the continuing series (the sixth book is to be released this Fall), but, unfortunately, I found bad news in the actual reading. That's not to say that the writing wasn't great, as Penny's writing is always smooth and satisfying, but Penny seems to have turned upon her creations. After spending four books creating a village in which readers wanted to live and wonderful characters who readers wanted to spend time with, Penny, like Saturn devouring his children, ripped open the ugly side of some of her characters. I found myself aghast with horror and emotional distaste at the thoughts and actions of characters that I had come to love through her first four books. I won't spoil it for those of you who have not yet read this book by giving specific details, but, if you are like me, you'll find your emotions in a state of flux as you come to hate characters that you had previously really liked. Penny may have been trying to achieve a more realistic picture of what small villages and people are truly like, but, if I had wanted that kind of realism, I would have picked up a non-fiction book. Instead of eagerly awaiting the next book in the series (as I did with each of the first four), I now find myself wondering if I even want to bother reading about these nasty, jealous, greedy, criminal characters again.

"The Brutal Telling" is Louise Penny's fifth book set in the village of Three Pines, near Montreal. To get things rolling, an unknown hermit is found dead in the local bistro owned by two gay partners, Olivier and Gabri. Chief Inspector Armande Gamache and his colleagues Isabelle Lacoste and Jean Guy Beauvoir of the Surete du Quebec return to Three Pines to track down the murderer. The Gamache books do a very good job of mixing a cozy-style mystery plot with the sort of subjects you'd find on PBS during the weekend (e.g., cooking, antiques, lifestyle portraits, travel, the arts). The puzzle at the heart of the mystery is not exceptional; many mystery lovers will figure out the culprit's identity before the end. Luckily, Penny's books have more to offer than the crime plot alone;

the beautiful backdrop, the perceptive characters and the various other smaller subplot mysteries grab the reader's interest. None of it is very new, mind you, but it all adds up to make a good if not great read. If you like P.D. James' Inspector Dalgliesh, you'll probably like Gamache. They're similar in their sensitivities and sensibilities. Also, the overall tone of this crime series reminds me of the British TV program "Midsomer Murders" featuring Inspector Barnaby. In that series, the village environment is used well, the crimes are shocking but not overly violent, and the characters draw you in with their small-town likability and, at times, eccentricities. I'd say the same is true of Penny's works including this one, "The Brutal Telling." I give this book three stars because I found it entertaining and enjoyable but not especially innovative or enlightening; filling a novel with references to poetry and art, for example, isn't a substitute for actual ideas.

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