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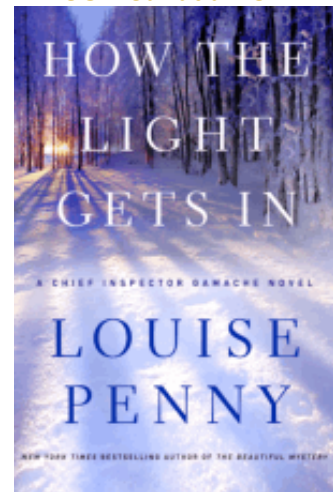
Louise Penny's March Newsletter

"It always amuses me that the biggest praise for my work comes for the imagination, while the truth is that there's not a single line in all my work that does not have a basis in reality. The problem is that Caribbean reality resembles the wildest imagination."

- **Gabriel Garcia Marquez**



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Sun screen and and snow boots



When I look up from the laptop as I'm writing, this is what I see. Can you believe it? We can't. We're in Jamaica, and every day we wake up, throw open the shutter doors, and greet paradise, slightly afraid we've died and gone to Heaven, slightly afraid we haven't.

This feels so much like Gilligan's Island that in my mind Michael and I are Mr and Mrs Howell (though I suspect to others we're more like the Skipper and Gilligan).



By the time you're reading this, Michael and I will be home. And this is what we see.

Also beautiful, in it's own way. (As a Canadian, I'm honour bound to put the 'u' in honour and to say that snow is glorious.). The funny thing is, we actually love snow - but a two week break in Jamaica is pretty dam fabulous too!!

Michael twisted his knee at the Montreal airport just before our flight was called. One of those odd little moments that most times goes unnoticed - but that this time produced an injury. Interestingly there was - get this - an empty wheelchair within two feet of us when it happened.

I grabbed Michael with one hand and the chair with the other (if you were in the Montreal airport expecting a wheelchair that never arrived - sorry), plopped him into it and quickly discovered that a wheelchair is a pretty amazing tool. Not just to get around with, but to zip past all others. Magic.

'Excuse me, wheelchair coming through,' I smiled and pushed.

'I think I can walk,' said Michael

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'Shhhh!'

He is now dancing to a live band under the stars, each night after dinner here at the Jamaica Inn. Thanks to the kindness of the staff he has made a remarkable recovery. Coconut cream pie played a role too, I think. But I might have to shove him back into a wheelchair at the other end.

'Look in pain,' I'll whisper to Michael when we get off the plane in Montreal.

'How's this?' he'll say.

'I said "look in pain", not "look embarrassed",' I'll hiss. 'Excuse me, wheelchair coming through.'

Oh, I can't begin to tell you how peaceful and relaxing it is here. How very, very welcome this quietude is, and how fortunate we are. You know, I used to look at the Inn's website, for years, and dream of coming. And then, suddenly, we could.

I suspect the joy is all the more intense because this isn't something we ever expected to experience.

The Long Way Home - Publisher feedback

The peace and pleasure are also heightened because just before leaving, in early February, I finished the fourth draught of THE LONG WAY HOME. I was going to leave it until after the vacation, then do another draught, but I realized I'd probably done as much as I could, and I now needed 'professional help'.

So, before I could chicken out, I addressed an email to my US and UK editors, as well as my agent, attached the manuscript, said a prayer and hit "send".

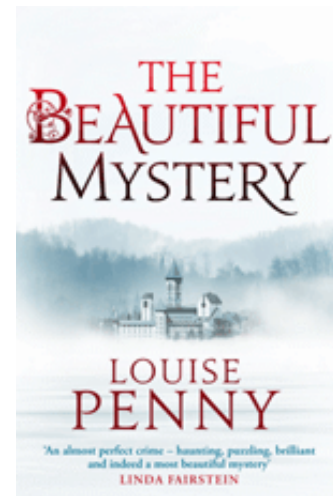
And almost immediately began checking my emails to see if they'd read it yet. I'm not kidding. Within half an hour I was fretting that they'd read it and hated it.

I do need professional help.

But two days later the replies came rolling in. First my agent, Teresa Chris - who loved it. Ahhhh dear lord, the exhale.

Then my US editor, Hope Dellon, at St Martin's Press/Minotaur Books wrote:

'...the book may well be your greatest ever-which I do not say lightly; it seems impossible that you could ever top your previous achievements, and then you do....There is so much genius here that I am in genuine awe.'



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Here's the order of the **Chief Inspector Gamache** books, from the first to the most recent:

STILL LIFE

A FATAL GRACE / DEAD COLD

THE CRUELEST MONTH

A RULE AGAINST MURDER / THE MURDER STONE

THE BRUTAL TELLING

BURY YOUR DEAD

A TRICK OF THE LIGHT

THE BEAUTIFUL MYSTERY

HOW THE LIGHT GETS IN

And finally my UK publisher, David Shelley, of Little, Brown wrote:

"...even by your standards, this is an extraordinary book....I am staggered by the book - you always surprise me, but you have surpassed yourself this time."

I am trying not to decide that they're all drunk. And also in need of professional help.

As you see, my vein of insecurity is vast, if it was gold we'd own the planet.

Fine-tuning

Now, THE LONG WAY HOME is far from perfect, or finished. What happens next is that the editors send each other their detailed notes - my agent reviews them - and then they're sent on to me. Often up to 20 pages of thoughts on how to improve the book. Sometimes it's details - like a character ordering black coffee in one paragraph and sipping a cappuccino in another.

And sometimes it's more substantial...confusion over a plot point perhaps, or why a character would do something.

From their point of view they are of course sending helpful notes. From my point of view it's like opening an attachment filled with something soft and smelly.

How dare they not shower me, and the book, with unbridled praise? Where're the flowers? The private jets? The bowing and scraping?

Professional help? I'm beyond that. Just show me the padded room.

So that's what March is about. Once my howls of outrage and pain pass, I re-read the notes, realize, reluctantly, that they are brilliant, then get down to this part of the process. I don't accept all the notes - some I disagree with and we discuss. Like adults. Mostly. But I do have to say, I would be a fool not to take what Hope and David and Lucy and Teresa say seriously and with huge gratitude. They know and love the books, and characters, and we all want THE LONG WAY HOME to be something we can be proud of, forever.

If you're interested, you can now pre-order from your local bookstore, or online. [Here's a link that might help.](#)

Thank you so much for telling others about the Gamache book, and championing the series.

March events

Now, I say March will be given over to this 'fine-tuning' of THE LONG WAY HOME. But not exclusively. I have the very great delight to be one of the guests of honor (honour...) at Left Coast Crime. This is the annual crime writers/readers gathering, that moves along the western US. This year it's in Monterey.

There is an extraordinary roster of authors! If you like crime fiction, as I do, you'll want to try to get there. It's on from March 20th to March 23rd. [Here's the link.](#)

I have three events. Two panels:

Thursday, March 20th from 2:30 to 3:15
Bobbies vs Mounties
Kathy Bennett - moderator
Brenda Chapman
Ann Cleeves
Deborah Crombie
and me

Saturday, March 22nd from 9am to 9:45
Heart and Soul of Murder - Mysteries with Meaning
Jacqueline Winspear - moderator

Ann Cleeves
Deborah Crombie
Michael Sears
and me

there's also a feature one-on-one interview with me. My US publisher, Andrew Martin, of Minotaur Books, is flying in from NYC to do it -

Friday, March 21st from 5:15 to 6pm.

As well, Michael and I (along with my brother Doug who'll be coming to Monterey with us) will be hosting a table at the banquet on Saturday night.

I cannot begin to express my gratitude to the organizers of Left Coast Crime for choosing me as the International Guest of Honor (honour...snow is great). Especially when you see the caliber of the other guests being honored, as you can see if you click on the link.

I am so excited about THE LONG WAY HOME. It will be released on August 26th.

Thank you, thank you - for changing my life.

With a warm embrace,

Louise

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