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Louise Penny

December Newsletter



"Now, the essence, the very spirit of Christmas is that we first make believe a thing is so, and lo, it presently turns out to be so."

Stephen Leacock

HOME

Can you believe it's December already? I think that's the first Christmas miracle - the fact it comes as a surprise every year.

We're in our new condo. Here are a few photos (above). Michael felt immediately at home. As did Bishop. They just slipped right into the new place as though they've always lived here. And, truthfully, so did I.

It is perfect.

After 6 weeks of crying about leaving the old home, and going through all the letters and photographs, the books, the clothing, and getting rid of so much, and feeling, honestly, a bit shattered by it all - well, we walked across the threshold here, and it felt immediately right.

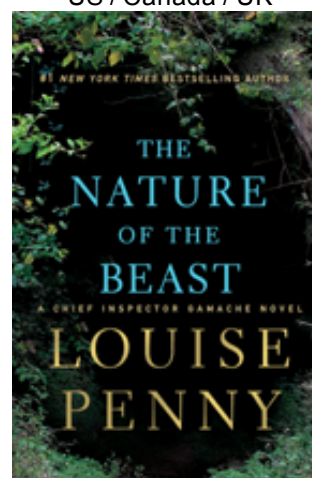
You know that feeling?

Ahhhh.

Of course, it helped immeasurably that My Assistant Lise, and Kirk, and Walter and all sorts of other friends had worked so hard

The Nature of the Beast

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The Long Way Home

US / Canada / UK

to get it set up. What would we ever do without our friends? And our sister-in-law in Toronto offered to drive all the way down, to help unpack.

Beautiful.

We have already had our Christmas, as far as we're concerned. More gifts than we could have ever hoped to be given.

But, since we love Christmas and are so happy in our new home, Michael and I are throwing a housewarming/Christmas party, for the first time in years.

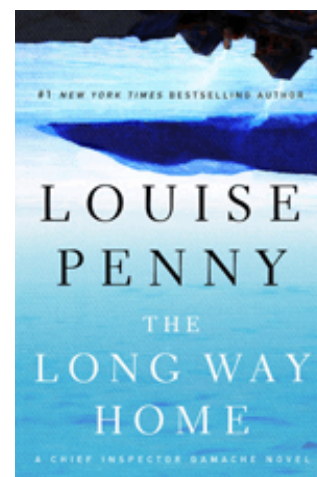
ESTATE SALE

Oh, something else I wanted to tell you about - for those of you who live nearby - we're holding a sale of items that couldn't come with us. Our friend Kirk, who is organizing it, calls it an 'estate sale'. But if it is, there is a very large 'garage' on the estate, if you know what I mean...

There's furniture, including some nice pine pieces. There're paintings and art work. There's glassware and blue and white china. And lots of odds and ends. You know what it's like. It would be wonderful if you found something you like. Much better than us putting it in storage.

You're all welcome to come and see. It's on Saturday, Dec 5th, from 8am until about 12 noon and it's at our old home here in the Eastern Townships of Quebec. The address is: 1501 Mont Echo Rd, near Sutton.

Pat and Tony, who are housesitting with their dogs, will be very pleased to see all that we've left behind go, before the new owners move in.



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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

THE LONG WAY HOME

THE NATURE OF THE BEAST

BOOK NEWS

In book news, *THE NATURE OF THE BEAST*, the latest Gamache novel, has been chosen by Kirkus Reviews as one of the best books of 2015!! [Here's the link](#) - it makes a great reading list!

Another exciting event in November is that I finally, finally finished the first draft of the next Gamache book! As you might remember, I started it back in April, and the writing continued in the old house, in London, in Lyon, in Jamaica....and on into the new home.

But a week or so ago I wrote, The End. Ahhhhh.

More drafts to come, for sure. At least three. But I have to say, the first is by far the longest and the most frightening. And the hardest.

Am well into the second draft now. This goes so much faster, since I now know what the story is about (which I find helpful), the character development, the plot twists, the themes. In the first draft, I toss everything onto the page. The second draft is mostly about tossing out. Getting rid of the unhelpful plot points, the useless characters, the long, long, descriptions. And it's not just a word here or there I erase - I take out whole pages.

By the time it gets out of my hands and into yours I want it to be lean, and strong, and warm, and funny, and maybe even thoughtful. I want the characters to reach out and invite you into their world, so that you're not a witness, but are living it with them. You're strolling beside Armand. You're sitting at Clara's table. You're sipping a café au lait at the bistro.

You feel the anxiety, the wonderment, the joy, the sorrow and shock, just as Myrna, Jean-Guy, Ruth feel them.

My hope is to have the second draft done by New Year's Day. And the third draft finished by mid-January.

I also hope to join the corps of the New York City Ballet, and win a Nobel Prize.

So - who knows....

GAMACHE CAFÉ AU LAIT MUGS

I meant to mention the Vive Gamache café au lait mugs in my last letter to you, and forgot. But it's not too late to order one for Christmas, for yourself or as a gift. If you hurry, of course.

There's a photo of it...and if you'd like one just contact Danny and Lucy at



our local bookstore, Brome Lake Books. Their email is: blb@b2b2c.ca

They ship around the world.

And I think the publishers would kill me if I didn't at least mention that books make a great Christmas gift. There. Done.

I'm a horrible promoter. I wonder if it's the Canadian in me. God knows I want you to read the books, and to tell others, but it just feels pushy to actually encourage you to do it. Even when I'm on tour with a new book I never, ever suggest people buy it. I assume you'll do what you want.

I remember early in my career, when booksellers would invite me to sit at a table in their store and introduce my books to customers, I wouldn't say a word. Just sat there like a lump. One bookseller actually come over and said, 'You are the worst book promoter I've ever seen.'

And she was right. It's a real skill. I see some colleagues who do it so graciously, but I always feel just deeply uncomfortable. I think it's because when I go into bookstores and am approached by an author about their book, I'm compelled to show an interest I don't actually feel. Cannot tell you how many unwanted books I've come away with.

CRIME WRITING COURSE

Now, a fellow author whose works I am genuinely excited about is Rhys Bowen. She writes a few series (and makes me feel like a slug). Molly Murphy. Her Royal Spyness. Evan Evans. All wonderful.

Rhys is brilliant and smart, funny and thoughtful. And such a terrific person. Well, guess what? She's writer in residence at a writing workshop in Tuscany this coming May. She's giving a course on writing crime fiction. There are only 12 places, and it will be fabulous! Tuscany. Rhys. Murder!

If you want to find out more, here are a couple of links:

<http://www.minervaeducation.net/>

<http://www.facebook.com/MinervaEducationn>

If you've ever wanted to write your own book, this will be a great primer. And perhaps even life-changing. If I could sign up, I would.

PARIS

Like you and everyone else, Michael and I heard with horror about the tragedies in Paris. Those poor people. But what a great city. The City of Light that will not be dimmed. Or bowed. And neither will we. Nor will we lash out at people who have done nothing to earn anyone's hatred. These really are times to test our souls. It is so easy to let fear, disguised as prudence, take away our humanity. This is a time for more kindness, not less. For more inclusion, not less. The only way for goodness to triumph is to feed it. Easy to say, I know. But I'm going to try.

On the personal front, we've been through a lot of changes in the past few months, and throughout it all you have been there, beside Michael and me. We have felt your support, and leaned on you more than once.

Please know that we're both fine, and FINE. All is well. In fact, it is perfect.

Have a wonderful holiday season, and know that we are sending you all the lovely thoughts you offered us.

Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah -

Love,

Louise, Michael and Bishop

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