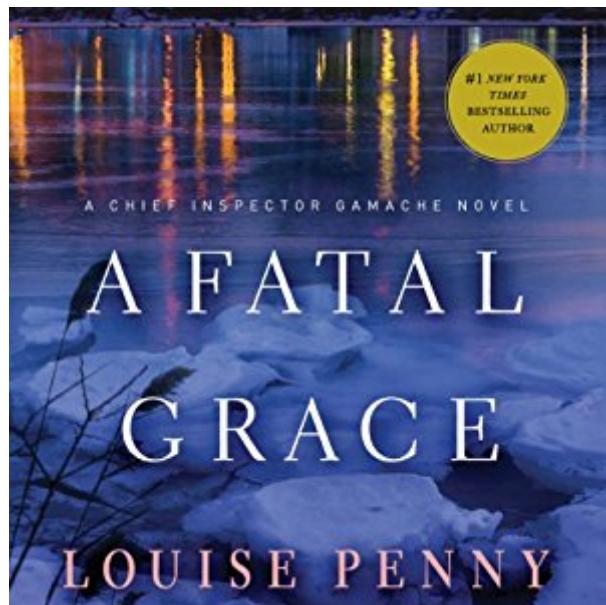


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# A Fatal Grace: Chief Inspector Gamache, Book 2



## Synopsis

Winner of the 2007 Agatha Award for Best Novell! Welcome to winter in Three Pines, a picturesque village in Quebec, where the villagers are preparing for a traditional country Christmas, and someone is preparing for murder. No one liked CC de Poitiers. Not her quiet husband, not her spineless lover, not her pathetic daughter - and certainly none of the residents of Three Pines. CC de Poitiers managed to alienate everyone, right up until the moment of her death. When Chief Inspector Armand Gamache, of the SÃ©rÃ©nÃ©tÃ© du Quebec, is called to investigate, he quickly realizes he's dealing with someone quite extraordinary. CC de Poitiers was electrocuted in the middle of a frozen lake, in front of the entire village, as she watched the annual curling tournament. And yet no one saw anything. Who could have been insane enough to try such a macabre method of murder - or brilliant enough to succeed? With his trademark compassion and courage, Gamache digs beneath the idyllic surface of village life to find the dangerous secrets long buried there. For a Quebec winter is not only staggeringly beautiful but deadly, and the people of Three Pines know better than to reveal too much of themselves. But other dangers are becoming clear to Gamache. As a bitter wind blows into the village, something even more chilling is coming for Gamache himself.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Readers of these excellent books need to be aware that *Dead Cold* and *A Fatal Grace* are the same book - the first one is the British title and the second the American title - otherwise, no difference! I made the mistake of ordering them both.... it happens sometimes.

"Fatal Grace" is the second in Penny's excellent series featuring Sûreté du Québec Chief Inspector Armand Gamache. Gamache returns to the small town of Three Pines when one of its residents is electrocuted during a curling match. It soon becomes clear that this was no accident, it was murder. Gamache discovers the victim, who is not liked by anyone, including her family, is not who she said she was. Slowly, but surely Gamache peels back layer after layer in his search for the killer. With each layer peeled away, he learns something new about the residents of the small town, about the deceased, and about the murderer. As with all the books in this series, there are recurring characters. While you don't necessarily have to read the series in the order it was written, you will miss the joy of getting to know them as Gamache speaks with each one. While Gamache heads the investigation, his team, including a spy working for the head of the Sûreté du Québec, is instrumental in turning up pieces of the puzzle that Gamache finally puts together in order to discover who the killer was. One of the things that readers will savor is Penny's ability to coin a phrase. One of my favorites from this book is when Gamache speaks about his deceased dog, "Gamache had had the impression it wasn't that his old heart had stopped, but that Sonny had finally given it away." Penny's descriptions of the winter weather will have the reader inching up the thermostat so vividly does the author make the reader feel the bitter cold of a winter's day in Quebec. This is one of the best series being written. Penny is in the same league as P.D. James, Charles Todd, and Laurie R. King. Don't miss this author and her series starting with "Still Life."

Chief Inspector Armand Gamache and his officers have been called back to the town of Three Pines. CC de Poitiers, an extremely unpleasant woman, has been murdered in public at the height of a curling match. Figuring out how she was killed is as much a mystery as uncovering who killed her. Penny's books are deceptive. On one hand, they seem a simple traditional mystery, set in a small town with lots of interesting, quirky characters, lots of suspects from which to choose and good twists and turns along the way. Penny does do dialogue well and her sense of place is evocative. But then there a second layer, hard to describe, but one I find makes me occasionally stop and think while reading and stays with me long after I've closed the book. Penny is one of those I can be being on my very short list of authors to re-read. Highly recommended.

This is the second novel in my favorite new mystery series, and it's every bit as good as the first one. *STILL LIFE* introduced Chief Inspector Armand Gamache of the Sûreté du Québec, and he solved a murder in the colorful village of Three Pines, just a few miles north of the U.S. border. In this new mystery, he's back in Three Pines at Christmastime, looking for another murderer among

the eccentric local population. Every mystery series needs a good detective and a good setting, and Penny is better than most at evoking her small Canadian town and the vivid people in it. And Gamache is a memorable creation--I really hope we'll be seeing a lot more of him in the years ahead. Not since Agatha Christie's Marple and Poirot have I found such a likable crimesolver. If you enjoy good writing, fair clues and surprising solutions, you're going to love this series. Highly recommended.

A word of warning - after thoroughly enjoying "Still Life" and "Dead Cold", I bought "A Fatal Grace" only to find that it was not a new book but "Dead Cold" (published in the UK in 2006) with a different title & a 2007 date of publication for the American market. There was no mention of this in the product information. I also fail to understand why we can't have the same title for readers in the UK, Canada, Australia New Zealand & the US.

I very much enjoyed "Still Life" but unfortunately "A Fatal Grace" is not nearly as entertaining. I had the same kind of experience reading it that one of the inhabitants of Three Pines, Clara, had when viewing the Christmas window in a department store in which she formerly had been completely able to lose herself: an unpleasant realization shattered the fantasy. A psychopathic minor Martha Stewart is murdered in Three Pines at Christmas. She is a woman so horrible that most of the villagers have motives to kill her. Inspector Gamache of the Surete believes that the key to her death lies in her mysterious past which seems to be somehow connected to Three Pines. The characters from "Still Life" reappear, but instead of being quirky and eccentric, they are now overdrawn black-or-white cardboard figures. The village is no longer just charming--it's greeting card perfect. Inspector Gamache, always too good to be true, is now a saint. Apparitions of God appear. The victim is an impossibly motivated woman with a literally unbelievable rationale. A subplot having to do with politics within the Surete is supposed to draw us further into the series, but really seems an unnecessary distraction. However, Ms. Penny's work has moments of descriptive power and good humor, and I have to confess to enjoying the descriptions of Three Pines during the Christmas season in spite of myself. I hope her future novels return to the level of her first.

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