

# **The Beautiful Mystery: A Chief Inspector Gamache Novel Study Guide**

**The Beautiful Mystery: A Chief Inspector Gamache  
Novel by Louise Penny**

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## Plot Summary

"The Beautiful Mystery" by Louise Penny is a novel which details the investigations of inspectors Armand Gamache and Jean-Guy Beauvoir into a murder at a monastery in Quebec.

Gamache and Beauvoir travel to the remote and secluded Saint-Gilbert-Entre-les-Loups in the wilderness of Quebec, to see about the murder of Prior Mathieu, the leader of the choir at the monastery. The monastery is home to twenty-four brothers, headed by Abbot Philippe. Philippe welcomes the investigators, who are the first nonreligious people to set foot in the monastery in hundreds of years. Though they believe in God, they are not clergy. Through a thorough investigation, they discover the monastery is split. The choir has produced a CD of beautiful Gregorian chants that has captivated millions worldwide. While some want to rush into their success, to repair their monastery and spread the Word of God, others are more conservative, and want to take things slowly. At last, it is revealed that the newest monk, Luc, is the murderer, having killed Mathieu because he wanted to modernize some of the music for the world, and Luc thought this an abomination.

At the same time, the Superintendent of the Surete du Quebec, Francoeur, arrives, and intends to sow indecision between Gamache and his partner, Beauvoir. This is done successfully, with Beauvoir becoming readdicted to pain killers given to him by Francoeur. Beauvoir, who is in love with Gamache's daughter, nevertheless leaves with Francoeur instead.



# Prologue - Chapter 12

## Prologue - Chapter 12 Summary

Prologue - Over time, chanting at monasteries falls away from the original songs, and these new songs are considered corrupt. Dom Prosper, a French monk, revives the Abbey of Saint Pierre in Solesmes, France in 1833, and revives the original Gregorian chants. Such chants are considered beautiful mysteries, the voice of God. Research into the original songs is done, and Dom Prosper and the Vatican each come up with competing sources for the originals. Eventually, Dom Prosper wins out, and while he has much of the original chants, he is missing the way to begin the chants, the first word, the beautiful mystery.

Chapter 1 - In the monastery of Saint-Gilbert-Entre-les-Loups, in the wilderness of Quebec, Dom Phillippe finds himself reluctant to begin the day, to ring the signal bell. Jean Guy Beauvoir, of the Surete du Quebec, is having breakfast with his girlfriend, Annie Gamache, daughter of Chief Inspector Armand Gamache. Beauvoir wants to tell Gamache about the relationship, but is worried about doing so. Gamache calls a moment later with news of a murder. Beauvoir then heads out to meet up with Gamache.

Chapter 2 - Beauvoir and Chief Inspector Gamache are being driven across the water by open boat, along with local Surete agent Captain Charbonneau. It is the autumn, and the monastery refuses to admit visitors, until now. Two dozen cloistered monks live there.

Chapter 3 - The boatman says he'll wait for three minutes for Gamache, Beauvoir, and Charbonneau. When the three are admitted, the boatman agrees to wait until five o'clock. The monastery is beautiful, and Gamache is amazed by the beauty, by the light inside the monastery. They continue on, and are led by a young monk, barely more than a boy, to another door which then opens.

Chapter 4 - The abbot of Saint-Gilbert, Dom Philippe, meets them beyond the door. The young monk, Frere Luc, retreats. The monks at Saint-Gilbert have taken a vow of silence, so Dom Philippe's answers are short and to the point. In a garden outside is the body of Brother Mathieu, the choir master. Millions have listened to Mathieu's arrangements around the world, and Gamache is saddened to see him dead. Mathieu has been killed brutally by having his head bashed several times, and dragged himself to the position where he died. They do not understand why he had the energy to crawl away, but not to leave a message about his killer. Charbonneau suggests the man crawled away to die alone, like an animal. As Gamache and his men inspect the crime scene, three other monks keep vigil at Mathieu's side, and pray.

Chapter 5 - While Gamache believes in God and Jesus Christ, he doesn't attend church regularly. Gamache knows that Beauvoir has, in the past, been in serious pain, has



needed heavy medications, and then help to get off those medications. Gamache watches over Beauvoir like a father. Gamache looks around the garden, and sees the flowers and herbs planted -all of them medicinal, all of them with a purpose. The murder of Mathieu also has a purpose, Gamache knows. Gamache also notices that Dom Philippe appears stressed, on the verge of collapse even. Brother Simon explains how he found Mathieu's body while tidying up the garden. The garden is only ever entered by Simon or Philippe. Simon then goes to seek out Brother Charles, the medical monk. Charles confirms Mathieu is dead, but says he doesn't have any idea who could have killed him. Philippe says he can't believe a murder has happened in the monastery, of all places. He also reveals to Gamache that Mathieu had been his best friend.

Gamache knows that Mathieu has indeed been murdered, not by an outsider, but by one of the other monks. Philippe reveals he had been in the basement when Simon had come to find him, that he had been discussing with Brother Raymond the geothermal and solar power systems for heating the monastery. As the body of Mathieu is brought in, the monks begin chanting.

Chapter 6 - Gamache, Beauvoir, Charbonneau, and Brother Charles circle around Mathieu's body on the examination chamber in the medical room full of modern medical equipment and supplies. Philippe is also present. A piece of paper falls from Mathieu's sleeve, ancient vellum, with writing in Latin. It appears to say "day of wrath" from the Mass for the Dead. The writing is neume, old musical notation not used for a thousand years. This leads Philippe to believe the music might be plainchant in an old form of Latin. Mathieu, at sixty-two, had been healthy enough. He had played hockey in the winter with the others, which amuses Gamache, and reminds him of the concept of Muscular Christianity. Gamache realizes that Mathieu has died to protect the paper in his sleeve.

Chapter 7 - Beauvoir and Charbonneau, having interviewed the monks, have come to report to Gamache, who, meanwhile, has searched Mathieu's cell. There is nothing much there, save scores of books on music, and innumerable sheets of written music. Beauvoir reveals the monastery has four main areas of work: the vegetable garden, the animals, physical repairs, and cooking. It is revealed that all of the monks were at their stations, with witnesses. None of the monks admitted to being in a fight or an argument with Mathieu. Gamache wonders why the monastery has been built so far from civilization -to keep the sins of the world out, or something worse in. Time is running out, and Gamache doesn't want to be on the island overnight. Beauvoir reveals that their Black-Berrys can still do texts, but not calls; and the satellite they brought with them to the monastery isn't working.

A short time later, Philippe addresses his monks, and tells them to be open and honest with the police, for they have no secrets to hide. He then tells the monks that one of them has killed Mathieu, and needs to confess.

Chapter 8 - As Gamache and his men prepare to leave the monastery with the body of Mathieu, they realize the place appears to be deserted. The door is still locked.



Gamache sends Beauvoir and Charbonneau to find the monks. While Gamache waits, he looks through an ancient book, and then hears chanting growing closer.

Chapter 9 -Gamache finds the monks entering the church through a wall. Beauvoir arrives a moment later, as does Charbonneau. They bring Mathieu's body inside, and only Simon looks up slightly. The three inspectors respectfully sit through the church service. Philippe reveals that the monks have been in Chapter. Philippe thanks Gamache for having the body of Mathieu brought to the church so the monks could pray for him, and for respecting their Vespers mass. Gamache and Beauvoir decide to stay on, until they find the murderer.

Chapter 10 - Beauvoir sets up an Incident Room in the study while Gamache goes over interviews and speaks to other monks. Gamache learns that all of the monks are expert musicians, and all must have been recruited, like hockey players. Beauvoir explains that murders are sparked by changes, by provocations. The most recent arrival, Brother Luc, may have somehow upset the balance and harmony. Gamache goes to see Luc, who reveals he has been at Saint-Gilbert for ten months. Luc has come to the monastery because of the music, knowing that he can find God anywhere- but only the music can be found at Saint-Gilbert. Luc explains he has met God through their music. Gamache asks Luc about the music notes, and Luc says the scrap of music is masquerading as a Gregorian chant, that it is too fast to be a Gregorian chant. Luc believes someone was trying to mock Mathieu, to mock the chants, and Mathieu wanted to stop it. Luc explains that not everyone was happy about the first recording the monks made, heard by millions. As Luc is about to reveal who, Simon arrives to bring Gamache to dinner.

Chapter 11 - The meals prepared for dinner are delicious, but none of the monks seem to have an appetite. The meal is eaten in silence, and then Gamache and Beauvoir rise to address the monks. Gamache explains that a murder investigation will be catastrophic. The only way to avoid such a painful process, Gamache says, is for the murderer to give himself up. Philippe rises to reveal he has lifted the vow of silence, so there is no longer an obligation not to speak to the police. If anyone has information, they are encouraged to speak to the inspector. Such actions will test their belief in God, and their dedication to Him and to their faith, morality, and values. One of the monks rises to ask why they should trust the outsiders, when outsiders have persecuted them in the past and lied to them. Gamache realizes the community of monks is divided, such as over the first recording, and the planned second recording.

Chapter 12 - Beauvoir recharges his BlackBerry while in bed, and writes to Annie about the day's adventure. Gamache does the same with his wife. Gamache awakes shortly after four in the morning, and wonders how a murderer could have slept so soundly. Either the murderer has no conscience, or the murderer has convinced himself that murder is not murder. Gamache gets out of bed and moves around, learns more about Saint Gilbert, who founded his order and lived to be 106. He was a friend of Thomas Becket, archbishop of Canterbury, and Becket was famous for quoting the Biblical idea of wolves in sheep's clothing. While in the church, the monks arrive for their services, and Gamache is caught in his pajamas.



## Prologue - Chapter 12 Analysis

The setting for the murder in "The Beautiful Mystery" by Louise Penny is as unlikely a setting for a murder as any -a secluded, devoutly-religious monastery in the wilderness of Quebec. The Saint-Gilbert-Entres-les-Loups is a beautiful and peaceful place to live. The twenty-four monks are self-sufficient mostly, selling chocolate-covered blueberries and CDs and digital downloads of their Gregorian chant album. The music is beautiful, and has captivated millions worldwide. However, it has also brought the problems of unwanted attention, and dissent in the ranks of the monks. While some want to plow ahead with their success for varying reasons, others want to take a more cautious approach to worldly notoriety. The interesting juxtaposition between worldly fame and Heavenly aspiration is further exhibited by the dichotomy human nature and the division of the monks in the monastery itself.

Into the mix of this setting are thrown Beauvoir and Gamache, who are themselves faithful in the sense that they believe in God, but do not attend church regularly. They are models of imperfection themselves - Gamache with his failure to fully break a ring of crime in the Surete itself, and Beauvoir with a lingering, though currently dormant addiction to painkillers from a previous episode in a factory raid. Beauvoir is further hiding a relationship with Gamache's daughter from Gamache, not quite sure about how his boss will react to his dating the boss's daughter. Here, they are closer to God than ever before, and their own imperfections will come back to haunt them in future chapters, in the sense that the past cannot be escaped, and sins always return for the sinner.



# Chapter 13 - Chapter 24

## Chapter 13 - Chapter 24 Summary

Chapter 13 - Gamache explains to Beauvoir he stayed for the mass in his pajamas. Beauvoir reveals that the brother who confronted them the previous evening was Brother Antoine, who has been at the monastery for fifteen years. Antoine has been the soloist on the first recording and Mathieu planned to replace Antoine with Luc on the new recording. All of the monks have come to Saint-Gilbert for the music, explains Brother Bernard to Gamache in the showers. Bernard reveals the CD of chants was Mathieu's idea, to make a little money for repairs to the monastery. The, CD, and the digital downloads, begins bringing in hundreds of thousands of dollars. But the fortune also brings unwanted fame, and planes, boats, and innumerable people begin appearing at the monastery.. As Bernard and Gamache talk, they tend to the animals and collect eggs from the chickens. Bernard reveals that the brothers reacted differently to the fame. Some wanted the validation, while others shunned it - including Philippe, who turned down a chance to perform at the Vatican. Mathieu wanted the vow of silence lifted to commune with the outside world, while the abbot, Philippe, did not. Sides were taken, and a civil war in the monastery had been being waged.

Chapter 14 - Beauvoir speculates that with fame and fortune has come influence. The only thing standing in the way is a vow of silence. He theorizes the abbot, or one of his allies, has committed the murder. Through services, Gamache discovers the music of the monks makes him feel whole, and transports him. Simon, who works as the abbot's secretary, agrees to find a plan of the monastery for Gamache. Philippe explains that not everyone will always agree with his decisions, but he has to continue to discover the different between his own will, and God's will. Beauvoir goes to talk to Luc, and discovers that most of the day, Luc studies Gregorian chants to learn his parts. Luc also reveals that if he was selected as the new soloist, Antoine would just have to accept it, because the prior Mathieu always got his way.

Chapter 15 - Gamache examines the plan of the monastery with Philippe. He discovers thirty bedrooms instead of twenty-four, which Philippe explains are there just in case of the unexpected. Philippe explains that when he seeks to recruit a new monk, his first order of business is to make sure the monk will live with God through Christ. Luc has come to the monastery without a second skill to his singing. He is young, Philippe explains, so he can be taught things such as animal husbandry. Philippe also explains that rumors abound of lost tunnels and hidden treasures, but nothing has ever been found. Gamache then realizes the plan and the scrap of paper from Mathieu are identical, and the map is signed by Dom Clement in 1634. The scrap of paper is old, but the ink on it is new. Going through an old workbook, they discover an chant written in complex neumes, as though it were a multi-layered chant meant for an instrument as well. Gamache asks for a copy, and Philippe says the monks can make a copy for him.





Chapter 16 - Gamache and Philippe go into the abbot's garden. Philippe reveals he was inspected the geothermal system while Raymond was not present. Philippe explains that he had intended to meet Mathieu later in the morning, to discuss whether or not there would be another recording. Philippe did not want more chants to be brought out to the public, for it was one thing which kept their order together. Philippe also reveals that Antoine will take Mathieu's place, because Antoine is the right person for the job, defiance aside. The vow of silence can be lifted temporarily, but will never be permanently lifted, ever.

Beauvoir, meanwhile, goes to find Antoine in the vegetable garden. Beauvoir speaks to Antoine. Antoine explains he was not going to be replaced, that Luc had dreamed up the idea. Antoine does not know if there will be another recording, but he believes the escape of the music into the world to be the will of God, and the abbot wants to undo the music's release. Mathieu believed the monks should go out into the world, while the abbot opposed it. The abbot, Antoine explains, is a frightened old man who clings to the past.

As both men interview the monks, a plane zooms in overhead.

Chapter 17 - The monks and the inspectors rush to the front of the monastery in time to see the floating plane come in to dock. The passenger of the plane is from the Ministry of Justice of Quebec, Chief Superintendent Francoeur, who tells Philippe that Mathieu's death will be kept quiet for as long as possible. But neither Gamache nor Beauvoir know why Sylvain Francoeur is there. They also speculate that Mathieu's insistence on going public may have been a threat to the community, and he was killed to stop the monastery from falling apart. It is also possible that a cry of frustration from the abbot was taken literally by his friends, who then went on to kill Mathieu. Gamache reveals to Beauvoir that Philippe also denies there is a split in the monastery. They also discuss the rumors of tunnels and treasure.

Chapter 18 - Beauvoir, while moving through the forest of the island around the monastery, is discovered by a monk, Bernard, whom asks if he can help. The monk is collecting blueberries. Beauvoir shows Bernard the map of the monastery. Bernard has never seen it, and notices things are off-scale. The drawing shows the animal and vegetable gardens the same size as the abbot's garden, but in reality, they are twice as large. Bernard explains that the monks can leave the monastery whenever they want, to fish, jog, play hockey, and so on. Beauvoir reveals to Bernard the animosity between Francoeur and Gamache. Gamache had arrested former Superintendent Arnot for murder and sedition, when the Surete just wanted to fire them and let the whole thing drop. Gamache had refused, and made many enemies by pursuing justice. Beauvoir also discovers that Bernard is one of Philippe's men. Bernard also reveals that he himself was once prior, but was replaced by Mathieu. Beauvoir begins wondering if the abbot is a jailer, keeping sinners inside the walls of the monastery to recant and repent.

Chapter 19 - Gamache and Francoeur meet up. Gamache goes over the coroner's report brought by Francoeur. Francoeur insists he is there to help, and he is present for the purposes of press control, and to make sure the Surete doesn't look idiotic when



news of the murder breaks. There is much hostility between the two, interrupted by Beauvoir, who speaks to Gamache about the idea that the murder of Mathieu was certainly premeditated.

Chapter 20 - At dinner, Gamache points out Brother Raymond, in charge of maintenance, to Beauvoir. Raymond reveals the original monks had built the monastery to last, while succeeding generations continually loused things up. Raymond is one of Prior Mathieu's men, and believes the CD and digital sales would have secured the monastery for another thousand years, but Philippe had messed it all up. Raymond reveals the foundations need repairs, from the winters and the ground thawing and freezing, and from the roots. They have about ten years before the monastery will collapse -and that much time is needed to do repairs. Philippe believes two dozen monks can handle it, and Raymond thinks Philippe is incompetent, and Raymond considers him a murderer. Beauvoir also speaks to Brother Charles. Charles, as the doctor, has refused to take sides with anyone, finding it would be inappropriate. Gamache also speaks with Simon, who tends the chickens, and strikes up a repartee.

Chapter 21 - Gamache and Beauvoir meet up to compare notes. Beauvoir tells Gamache about Raymond and the foundations. The recording project was not just a vain thing for the monks, but a matter of survival. It is possible that Philippe himself orchestrated the whole affair with sending Simon on a fool's errand, while killing Mathieu in the meantime. The only thing that doesn't fit is the musical scrap found on Mathieu. Francoeur interrupts their meeting, asking for an update, which Gamache gives. Beauvoir agrees to bring Francoeur along on his own investigation.

Chapter 22 - Gamache is worried that Beauvoir will react violently to the Superintendent's taunts, and Beauvoir promises not to react. Beneath Saint-Gilbert, Beauvoir surprisingly discovers the walls to be intact, without roots growing through them as described by Raymond. They meet with Raymond, who gives them a tour of the geothermal and septic systems. Beauvoir asks Raymond about the hidden room, and Raymond says that such a thing would have been found, between indoor plumbing, installing electricity, the geothermal system, and so on. Beauvoir directly questions Raymond, on whether or not he believes Philippe is responsible for murder. Beauvoir calls Raymond a hypocrite for following God, but spreading lies and rumors, unless they were the truth, which he is too afraid to say. He believes Raymond took sides with the prior against the abbot, breaking his vows, and Raymond begins praying -for Beauvoir. Gamache, meanwhile, goes over the coroner's report.

Chapter 23 - Gamache meets up with Brother Simon again. Simon has made a copy, but requests help to translate the musical notes. Gamache consents to this. Simon, while not fluent in Latin, explains that what he is able to translate of the note doesn't make sense: "I can't hear you. I have a banana in my ear." Simon suggests Luc for the translation, because he is recently out of seminary. The words fit the meter of the music, however, Simon explains. They wonder if Mathieu was confronting whoever had written the music, and if Mathieu himself had not actually written it.



Chapter 24 - Francoeur reveals to Beauvoir that he is impressed by the interrogation. Francoeur tells Beauvoir that the other agents think he is a little puppy following his master around. All of Gamache's people are losers, Francoeur insists. But Beauvoir fires back that Gamache gave them all a chance when no one else would, that they think for themselves, that they don't cave in to the higher-ups like Francoeur. Francoeur retorts that he came up to the wilderness to save Beauvoir from Gamache.

Gamache, meanwhile, meets with Simon again. Simon, Gamache believes, was with Mathieu in his final moments may have somehow told Simon who killed him. Simon reveals he gave Mathieu the last rites, and Mathieu uttered the word, "homo". Simon confesses to wondering if the abbot and prior had ever had a relationship, but Simon doubts it. It is possible that perhaps the prior yearned for more, but never got it. Simon also reveals the murder weapon, an old iron rod used to gain admittance to the abbot's most private rooms.

## Chapter 13 - Chapter 24 Analysis

As the investigation gets underway, Beauvoir and Gamache come to understand just how deeply the monastery is divided over the record of chants that was put out to the public. While it is possible that vanity and vainglory are rooted in the decision to go public, it appears as though more practical concerns spur the order's self-revelation to the public.

The foundations of the monastery are cracking, and are in need of serious repairs. Those repairs will cost money -and will require CDs and music to be sold. At the same time, this can be taken metaphorically, that the release of the CD has brought about cracks in the order of the monks the way that Quebecois winters and the roots of their trees are destroying the monastery's physical foundations. The monks are questioning themselves and their purpose, as well as the direction in which they should seek to proceed in order to preserve themselves. This brings about another interesting point: the order of monks has recently been thought to be extinct by most people, something done to protect them from the Inquisition several centuries before. Now, in order to save themselves, they have revealed themselves to the world.

Meanwhile, the sins and failures of Gamache and Beauvoir come back to haunt them with severe force. In a religious place, they are forced to confront their own worst enemies under the watchful eyes of God. Beauvoir must confront his dormant drug addiction, while Gamache must confront his superior -the two men each other- and thus Gamache is confronted with the fact that his past efforts to deal with corruption in the Surete have failed, because Francoeur still reigns.



# Chapter 25 - Chapter 34

## Chapter 25 - Chapter 34 Summary

Chapter 25 - Beauvoir heads outside the monastery, rushing after Francoeur, charging into him, and knocking them both down. Francoeur trains his weapon on Beauvoir. Beauvoir accuses Francoeur of leaking a video of the deaths of friends on a raid led by Gamache into a factory, having found it on Francoeur's laptop. It was a raid that nearly killed Gamache and Beauvoir, and now Beauvoir wanted to kill Francoeur. Francoeur insists he didn't leak the tape, but that Gamache did. Francoeur tells Beauvoir that Gamache left him to die, that he was only useful so long as he was alive. But Beauvoir is still angry, though doubts have begun to appear in his mind.

Chapter 26 - Gamache and Simon speak in the abbot's garden. Simon admits he thinks Mathieu was killed by Abbot Philippe. Simon explains the recording is when the monastery became divided, due to fame and fortune. They were happy and content before then. While Philippe wanted to take things slowly, others wanted to run with the success. Gamache now believes that Philippe has committed the murder, but the scrap of paper with music on it is still the jarring mystery. Gamache goes and meets with Brother Charles. Charles reveals that the prior and Antoine were colleagues in love with Gregorian chant, and no other love between them. Beauvoir, meanwhile, goes to the Blessed Chapel to be alone. There, he takes an OxyContin.

Gamache and Beauvoir meet up later. Beauvoir reveals that the foundations seem good, and Gamache reveals the murder weapon.

Chapter 27 - Brother Sebastien arrives from Rome during mass, supposedly because of Mathieu's death, but Gamache knows better. Some other importance has brought Sebastien from Rome to Quebec. Sebastien is from the Dominican order, from the Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith -the Inquisition.

Chapter 28 - Beauvoir apologizes to Gamache over becoming angry with Francoeur, and Gamache realizes Francoeur has gotten to Beauvoir somehow. Beauvoir follows Gamache after he leaves and doesn't return. Gamache corrals Francoeur in the Chapter House, demanding to know what the Superintendent has said to Beauvoir. Francoeur says the harm on Beauvoir is there because of Gamache. While looking for Gamache, Beauvoir runs into Antoine, who also knows Sebastien isn't there for the murder. The two men talk about Antoine's love of fishing, hockey, music, and God that brought him to the monastery.

Gamache later returns to talk to Beauvoir, asking him what Francoeur said to him. Beauvoir reveals his conversation with Francoeur to Gamache. Beauvoir now knows he was stupid to doubt Gamache. They take a walk outside, and Gamache reveals that he believes the monastery has two walls- the new wall and the old wall. The new wall hides the plumbing and electrical wiring. Gamache later shows Sebastien the Chapter House.



Chapter 29 - Antoine goes to see Philippe. Antoine is curious about how Sebastien could have come from Rome over the murder, and they discuss the word "homo". Sebastien, meanwhile, explains that the neumes on the scrap of paper or not an insult or anything of the sort. Sebastien believes the paper of music is a homage of sorts, a celebration. Sebastien has come to the monastery to see if the Gilbertine monks truly did exist still after centuries. In the bathroom, Beauvoir takes two more pills. He watches the video of the failed raid over and over again.

Chapter 30 - Antoine and Philippe take Gamache aside later that evening, after Compline service. They believe what Mathieu said was "Ecce Homo", or "He is man". Philippe explains to Gamache that Antoine had become Mathieu's confessor, after Mathieu and Philippe had a disagreement over the direction of the music after the first recording. Gamache asks Philippe to call Etienne, the boatman, to come in the morning to pick up Beauvoir.

Chapter 31 - When Beauvoir awakes the next morning, he takes two more pills. Sebastien and Gamache talk in the church. Sebastien is interested to learn that, despite not being a church-going man, though a faithful man, Gamache is finding comfort in church. Gamache wonders if the chants are like addictions, and this offends Sebastien, who says the chants are nothing like addictions, because they do not weaken, but strengthen. Sebastien then goes in search of something, and comes across the laptop and the video, and continues his search.

Chapter 32 - Francoeur leaves the monastery to either write or read a message that Gamache, who follows him, cannot see. Gamache confronts him and demands to see the BlackBerry, but Francoeur refuses. He confronts Gamache with the information that Beauvoir and Annie are in a relationship -but the Gamaches already know this. Gamache storms away from Francoeur, and Sebastien arrives, and apologizes to Gamache for storming out of the chapel. Sebastien explains that "neumes" comes from the Greek word for "breath". Sebastien further explains that he hasn't just been seeking the Gilbertines, but their chant book. Sebastien and Gamache go to see it, and Sebastien reveals it is the first Book of Chants ever written. Sebastien points to a small dot - what Luc explains is a starting key. Because of it, the book is priceless.

Chapter 33 - Gamache goes to Beauvoir's room to find him still asleep, and disheveled. In the chapel, Beauvoir passes out, and Gamache rushes him to Brother Charles. Gamache discovers to his horror that it is from OxyContin. Charles reveals he had prescribed the pills for the abbot if needed. Gamache knows that someone had given Beauvoir the pills. When Beauvoir awakens, Gamache asks him what has happened. Beauvoir reveals the pills were left on his nightstand.

Chapter 34 - The boatman will arrive in an hour, and Gamache knows time is limited. Sebastian walks through mass, singing the silly lyrics to the music, interrupting the service. One monk, above the others, cries out, and reveals himself to be the murderer. It is Luc. He confesses that Mathieu wanted to modernize the music, substituting silly words to keep the meter -blasphemous, according to Luc- and when Luc wouldn't help him write the modern words, Mathieu threatened to drop him from the choir. Luc then



killed the prior. He said "ecce homo" when he killed Mathieu, because he realizes the choir leader was not a saint, but a man. While Gamache and Beauvoir pack, Beauvoir demands one last pill, and tackles Gamache to get it. Gamache overpowers Beauvoir, tells him he is suspended, and he is going straight to rehab. Gamache realizes who has given Beauvoir the drugs. With Beauvoir in tow, he confronts Francoeur, and Gamache reveals that he and his wife were giving Annie and Beauvoir privacy. Beauvoir leaves on a plane with Francoeur and Luc.

Sebastien and Gamache talk. Sebastien comforts Gamache, and also says the Vatican is considering paying for the foundation repairs, for they do not want to lose the Gilbertines from the Church. Sebastien wonders if Gamache knew who the murderer was when he asked Sebastien to sing the chant in mass. Only Luc was alone the morning of the murder, Gamache reveals.

On the plane, Francoeur gives Beauvoir a bottle of pills, and he gratefully takes two. Meanwhile, Philippe offers to be Gamache's confessor, but Gamache says that he is not yet quite ready.

## Chapter 25 - Chapter 34 Analysis

Gamache knows that Francoeur has come to sow dissension between he and Beauvoir, and later confronts him on this fact, after Beauvoir does - but fails to bring Francoeur down. Francoeur's scheming brings Beauvoir back to the pills he is addicted to, seeing them as a purely physical means to drive both Gamache and Beauvoir apart. Francoeur's own boss and hero, Arnot, had been taken down by Gamache in the past, and now Francoeur will stop at nothing to have his revenge. In this instance, the reader senses the resonant Biblical concept of "an eye for an eye"; though, with Francoeur, the revenge is not justified, and is an evil act in and of itself that does not warrant the appellation of true and just retribution.

By the end of the novel, it appears as though Francoeur has won. Even though Gamache still retains his position for the moment, it appears as if Beauvoir has gone over to Francoeur's side, and Francoeur is happy to give Beauvoir the pills he so desperately craves. While the two of them leave the monastery together with Luc as a prisoner, Gamache remains on the island with the monks, waiting for a boat back to the mainland. In so doing, there can be seen the imagery of Francoeur leading Beauvoir away from the Light, from Truth, from God; Beauvoir is turning his back not just on Gamache, but on God; and Gamache remains with God, seeing the Truth of things, but not currently having the means to present justice.



# Characters

## Armand Gamache

Armand Gamache is the main character and principle protagonist in Louise Penny's novel "The Beautiful Mystery". In his late fifties, Gamache is a Chief Inspector with the Surete du Quebec, and is married to Reine-Marie, and their daughter is Annie. Gamache is a kind and courageous man, whose adherence to honesty, justice, and principle stands above all else. Though he believes in God and in Jesus Christ, Gamache is not a regular church goer, yet he finds tremendous peace and solitude when he goes to the monastery of Saint-Gilbert to investigate the murder of Brother Mathieu. Gamache is deeply moved by the beautiful Gregorian chants the brothers sing.

Gamache, working with his partner, Jean-Guy Beauvoir, ultimately track down the killer monk, a young religious zealot named Luc. At the same time, Gamache's own worst enemy, Superintendent Francoeur, arrives to sow dissension between Gamache and Beauvoir. Gamache confronts Francoeur over this, and over Francoeur's enabling of Beauvoir to pain pills, but Beauvoir appears to be won over by Francoeur. Gamache, though he has solved the crime, appears to have lost his partner. At the end of the novel, Gamache remains true to his dedication to truth and to justice, and remains standing with God when everything else has come falling down.

## Jean-Guy Beauvoir

Jean-Guy Beauvoir is a main character and something of an antihero in Louise Penny's novel, "The Beautiful Mystery". Beauvoir is in a secret relationship with Annie Gamache, daughter of Beauvoir's boss, Chief Inspector Gamache. Beauvoir, previously wounded, has a dormant addiction to painkillers -an addiction helped by Gamache's involvement in his life. Beauvoir travels with Gamache to Saint-Gilbert, to help him track down the murderer of Prior Mathieu, which he does. Beauvoir is headstrong and rash at times, but appears to be dutifully and unfailingly loyal to Gamache.

While at Saint-Gilbert, Superintendent Francoeur arrives, and sows discord between Beauvoir and his hero, Gamache. Beauvoir also comes across pain pills left for him, presumably by the monastery's doctor, but in reality left by Francoeur. Beauvoir instantly becomes addicted to the pain pills again, and challenges Gamache for more after the murder is solved. When Gamache intends to bring Beauvoir back to rehab, Beauvoir refuses his help, and instead leaves with Francoeur, who gives Beauvoir more pills. It appears as if the partnership between Beauvoir and Gamache has been irrevocably broken.



## Philippe

Philippe is the abbot at the monastery of Saint-Gilbert. He is well-respected at first, but his decision to proceed slowly following the success of the first Gregorian chant album leads to many questioning his leadership and his abilities as abbot. Philippe is nevertheless kind, patient, and very faithful. He assists Gamache and Beauvoir in their investigation by giving them details about the monastery, life there, and by lifting the vow of silence temporarily so the Gilbertines can talk at will to the inspectors.

## Mathieu

Mathieu is a brilliant musician and faithful Catholic who composes and records Gregorian chants. His decision to modernize some of the chants for a second record meets with disapproval by the young zealot, Luc, who ultimately kills him for what he considers to be a blasphemy. It is Mathieu's murder that Beauvoir and Gamache seek to solve.

## Luc

Luc is a gifted singer and monk at the monastery of Saint-Gilbert. In his early twenties, he is the youngest and newest monk at the monastery. He is devoutly religious, and murders Mathieu for wanting to modernize some chants for release to the public. Luc is found out and arrested, and taken away from the monastery.

## Simon

Simon is the kindly and loyal secretary monk of Abbot Philippe. Simon tends to the chickens, as well as handling administrative duties. It is Simon who discovers the mortally wounded Mathieu, and hears his final words, which he relates to Gamache.

## Raymond

Raymond is a monk and is in charge of maintenance at the monastery of Saint-Gilbert. It is Raymond who discovers the foundations of the monastery in severe disrepair, and supports Mathieu's plans for a new album and going out into the world to increase sales to support the order.

## Francoeur

Francoeur is the Superintendent of the Surete du Quebec. He, besides Luc, is one of the two villains of the novel. Francoeur has escaped a corruption bust overseen by Gamache, and the two men hate each other. Francoeur comes to the monastery under the guise of screening the murder from the public, but in reality, comes to sow





dissension between Gamache and Beauvoir. Francoeur gives Beauvoir pain pills, causing his addiction to flare up once more, and challenges Gamache's authority. By the end of the novel, Francoeur appears to have taken apart the team of Gamache and Beauvoir, the latter of whom Francoeur leaves the island with.

## **Sebastien**

Sebastien is a Dominican monk from the Vatican who travels to Quebec to confirm that the Gilbertine Order is still in existence. He also seeks out the original Book of Chants, which the Gilbertines have in their possession.

## **Bernard**

Bernard is a kindly and informative monk who assists Gamache and Beauvoir in their inspection. Bernard has a love of chocolate-covered blueberries, which he makes and eats throughout the novel.



# Objects/Places

## Quebec

Quebec is a province in eastern Canada. It is the home of the Surete de Quebec, Gamache, and Beauvoir, and is home to the wilderness of Quebec, and the Saint-Gilbert-Entres-les-Loups monastery.

## The Wilderness of Quebec

The wilderness of Quebec is located in the Canadian province of Quebec. It is the location of the secluded Saint-Gilbert-Entres-les-Loups monastery, to which Gamache and Beauvoir travel.

## Saint-Gilbert-Entres-les-Loups

Saint-Gilbert-Entres-les-Loups is a monastery in the Quebecois wilderness, founded by Saint Gilbert in 1634 to escape persecution in Europe. It is the home of twenty-four monks who sing beautiful Gregorian chants, and is the place of the murder of Brother Mathieu. The monastery is simply-decorated, but beautifully-created, and is in the shape of an old musical note, the neume.

## The Abbot's Garden

The Abbot's Garden is a private garden in the monastery, used only by the abbot, Mathieu, and tended to by Simon. The abbot's garden is where Mathieu is found murdered.

## The Vegetable Garden

The vegetable garden is where the monks of Saint-Gilbert-Entres-les-Loups grow and tend vegetables which they use for cooking and eating. It is where Gamache and Beauvoir conduct some of their investigation.

## The Chapel

The chapel of Saint-Gilbert-Entres-les-Loups is the monastery's church. It is where the monks hold their daily prayers and sing their chants. It is where Gamache prays and attends services while staying at Saint-Gilbert-Entres-les-Loups.

## **The Dock**

The dock at Saint-Gilbert-Entres-les-Loups is where Gamache and Beauvoir arrive by boat, and where Francoeau arrives and departs by plane.

## **The Book of Chants**

The Book of Chants is first set down in the tenth century, and is carefully guarded and beautifully used for singing by the monks at Saint-Gilbert-Entres-les-Loups. It has been searched for by the Church for hundreds of years.

## **Metal Rod**

A metal rod is used to knock on the door of the abbot's quarters for admission. It is used to murder Mathieu by Luc, and later cleaned and set aside by Simon.

## **CD**

CDs (and digital downloads) contain the music of the monks at Saint-Gilbert-Entres-les-Loups. They use the proceeds to maintain their monastery. The CDs introduce the world to the beauty of their music of the monks.



# Themes

## Faith

Faith is one of the major, dominant, and overarching themes in Louise Penny's novel, "The Beautiful Mystery". Faith consists of belief, trust, or adherence to God, religion, and various ideas. Faith informs every single aspect of the book, and appears in two very distinct ways.

The first way in which faith appears has to do with the belief of the Gilbertine monks in God and in Jesus Christ. They have faith that God exists, that he is ever present and involved, and will intercede in the world if needed. The monks live their lives according to their faith in God, His plans, His ways, and His laws. Their salvation through Christ has to do with their faith in Jesus's divinity and humanity, and his resurrection. This belief fuels not only their lives, but their music, which is composed in honor of God, and to speak for Him as Him.

The second way in which faith appears in the novel has to do with human beings on a purely secular level, according to two people. Brother Philippe has faith that the Gilbertine monks will cooperate with the police, which they do. He also has faith the murderer will reveal himself, which the murderer does not. Beauvoir's faith consists in his dedication and loyalty to Gamache. Beauvoir believes Gamache is a good man and has his best interests at heart, until Beauvoir becomes re-addicted to painkillers, and rather than go to rehab, abandons his faith in Gamache to leave the island with Francoeur.

## Mystery

Mystery is one of the major, dominant, and overarching themes in Louise Penny's novel, "The Beautiful Mystery". Mystery has to do with the unknown, or with things that cannot be explained. Mystery appears in two primary forms in the novel, in terms of the plot of the novel, and a greater reality of the world.

The mystery of murder is, superficially, the most predominant form of mystery in the novel. Gamache and Beauvoir arrive to solve a murder. The mystery of the murder involves discovering who killed Brother Mathieu, and why. This is a journey embarked upon by Gamache and Beauvoir, and they discover the murderer to be Luc, the young religious zealot who does not want the Gregorian chants of the monastery modernized for popular ears.

The overarching and metaphysical mystery that supersedes the murder is that of creation, of God, of beauty, of everything that God has done in reality inside and outside the novel. Indeed, the mystery is exemplified in the reality of beauty of the music created and sung by the monks themselves, as they become not only one with God, but



sing with His holy voice as well. Such a transcendental experience defies explanation, though it commands tremendous meaning and importance to billions all over the world.

## Music

Music is one of the major, dominant, and overarching themes in Louise Penny's novel, "The Beautiful Mystery". Music forms a core component of the plot, and is the driving force behind most of the events of the novel. Music appears in two ways in the novel -as a unifying, transcendental force, and as one that ultimately divides.

In terms of uniting and transcending, the Gregorian chants created, sung, and recorded by the monks at Saint-Gilbert bring the listener to a higher plane, to a level closer to God. The world is left behind in pursuit of Heaven, but the transcendence is not one of addiction, as Brother Sebastien points out. It is one of strengthening the soul and the body and the spirit, and bringing one that much closer to God, whereas addictions diminish a person's personhood itself. This music unites the monks in holy harmony toward God, and gives inspiration and motivation to millions of believers and nonbelievers the world over.

In terms of division, the music sung by the Gilbertine monks leads to dissension and difference among the otherwise united order. While the monks want their monastery repaired, some want the fast track of fame and fortune taken quickly, while others want the path to such wealth taken slowly and cautiously. While this causes consternation and disagreement, it is ultimately the music itself that causes murder. Believing music modernization to be blasphemous, Luc kills Mathieu over it. Yet it is ultimately the music which helps to heal the shaken community of cloistered monks.



# Style

## Point of View

Louise Penny tells her novel "The Beautiful Mystery" from the third-person omniscient narrative. This is done for at least two reasons. The first is that there is much to be explained to the reader about the life of monks and the existence of monasteries, best done by an objective and omniscient third party. This allows the narrator to inform the reader without the characters having to break from their operations in order to explain pertinent things, thereby unnecessarily interrupting the plot. The second reason is that the third-person omniscient narrative provides the reader with a bridge between characters and events as they unfold around the monastery and through the investigation, making the transition between them much easier to handle.

## Setting

Louise Penny sets her novel "The Beautiful Mystery" in the Quebecois wilderness of Canada, at a remote and isolated monastery, Saint-Gilbert-Entres-les-Loups. The setting is perfect for the novel, for the novel revolves around the murder of a monk at Saint-Gilbert-Entres-les-Loups. The remote setting plays not only into the murder itself by ensuring the murderer is a monk, but adds realism to the story of the Gilbertine monks as persecuted people fleeing to the new world to find peace and reestablish their contact with God.

## Language and Meaning

Louise Penny tells her novel "The Beautiful Mystery" in language that is beautiful and poetic, despite the grim nature of the plot. This is done in order to enhance the beauty of the remote Quebec location of the novel, as well as to provide a marked contrast to the grisly crime that has unfolded. Indeed, the poetic language matches the beauty of the Gregorian chants contained themselves within the novel. This serves as a reminder that the beauty of God's creation, and the beauty of the mystery of creation and the music, pervades every single moment. The murder was not an act of God, but an act of man, where beauty and Truth are acts of God.

## Structure

Louis Penny divides her novel "The Beautiful Mystery" into thirty-four consecutive and chronological chapters which span the time period of about two days. This uncomplicated and straightforward structure allows the reader to follow the plot and the events of the novel easily, moving from one event to the next. The simple chapter structure therefore enhances and serves the plot by not distracting the reader away from the investigation and the religious beauty of the novel.



## Quotes

At the very end of his life, Dom Prosper knew there was a beginning. But it would be up to someone else to find it. To solve the beautiful mystery.

-Prologue, p. 4

It would have been beautiful, if not for the certainty that one of the men singing the words of God, in the voice of God, was a killer.

-Chapter 5, p. 45

God might be on the side of the monks, Beauvoir thought, but time wasn't.

-Chapter 6, p. 57

Transmutation, thought Gamache. Not water into wine, but a whisper into an audible word.

-Chapter 11, p. 100

"Gregorian chants aren't just music and they're not just prayer. They're both, together. The word of God sung in the voice of God. We'd give our lives up for that."

-Chapter 13, p. 115

More equal, as Orwell had it, than others. And people killed for that all the time.

-Chapter 14, p. 136

"I told the abbot he could stop praying. The miracle had happened. God gave us voices. And the most beautiful chants. And an age when they can be sent around the world. To inspire millions, while making millions..."

-Chapter 20, p. 205

The natural and the manufactured, come together here, in this far-flung monastery. Peace and rage, silence and singing. The Gilbertines and the Inquisition. The good men and the not-so-good.

-Chapter 29, p. 318

In the background the monks chanted. The Kyrie. The Alleluia. The Gloria. While in the prior's office Beauvoir was dying. Alone.

-Chapter 29, p. 320

There was something frightening about that level of zeal. For a single dot. In the beginning. The beautiful mystery. Finally solved.

-Chapter 32, p. 346



## Topics for Discussion

In Chapter 32, on page 346, Louise Penny writes, "There was something frightening about that level of zeal. For a single dot. In the beginning. The beautiful mystery. Finally solved." What is the importance of the dot? To whom is the dot important? What is the beautiful mystery? Does the dot mean the beautiful mystery is truly solved? Why or why not? Explain your answer.

Discuss the theme of music in the novel "The Beautiful Mystery" by Louise Penny. How does music appear in the novel? By whom is it created? What is the impact of music on both the monastery and the outside world? What are the consequences of the music? Do you believe that music is a positive or negative thing for the monks at Saint Gilbert? Is it both? Explain your answer.

Discuss the theme of faith in the novel "The Beautiful Mystery" by Louise Penny. What is faith? What kinds of faith appear in the novel? To whom is faith important, and in what ways? Is faith seen as a powerful and good thing in the novel, or as a negative and difficult thing in the novel? What is the ultimate impact of faith?

Being at the monastery of Saint-Gilbert has important consequences for the characters of Philippe, Luc, Gamache, and Beauvoir. What happens to each of these characters? Does the religious setting influence the words and actions of the characters? If so, how and why? Is being at the monastery for these characters a good or a bad thing? Why?

Discuss the theme of mystery in the novel "The Beautiful Mystery" by Louise Perry. What is mystery? What sorts of mysteries appear in the novel? Are these mysteries solved? Are some of these mysteries meant to be solved? Why or why not?