

A Fatal Grace Study Guide

A Fatal Grace by Louise Penny

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Plot Summary

"A Fatal Grace" by Louise Perry is a mystery novel in her series about Chief Inspector Gamache. In "A Fatal Grace," Gamache deals with two murders –one of a vagrant woman in Montreal and the other of a cruel and disliked designer and pseudo-guru, CC de Poitiers in Three Pines. Working with his adjutant, Beauvoir, as well as newcomer Lemieux, Gamache investigates the crimes, learning more and more about the residents of Three Pines in the process. Ultimately, it is revealed that CC is the daughter of the vagrant. She had a very unhappy childhood. About to make it rich with her work, CC murdered her mother to destroy the reality of her childhood. In turn, CC was murdered by her own daughter, fourteen year-old Crie, who had suffered all her life as a victim of verbal and emotional abuse, courtesy of CC.



Chapter 1-8

Summary

Chapter 1

CC de Poitiers is in Montreal, cheating on her husband with her lover, Saul Petrov. She is going to be murdered. CC has written a book for troubled people. It is self-published because no company wants it. Saul has taken the photo of CC that appears on the cover. He is a few years older than she, but the charm of their romance has worn off quickly for him. They are staying at the Ritz. He gets up from bed and finds a portfolio of beautiful artwork in the garbage. Saul longs to do such beautiful work, but knows he must one day be free of CC to do it.

Chapter 2

Crie gets ready for the Christmas pageant by putting on her costume. She is overweight, but a bright girl. Crie has made her own snowflake costume, where the other girls' mothers have made theirs. Meanwhile, Clara Morrow is at home in the tiny village of Three Pines. Sipping hot chocolate, she watches villages move through the streets. Clara and her husband Peter are artists. Only recently have they managed to get by, due to an inheritance from Clara's murdered friend, Jane Neal. Clara is waiting for Myrna, to head into Montreal to do some Christmas shopping. They live an hour and-a-half away from the city. Clara can't wait to see the Christmas window of Ogilvy's Department Store. Myrna picks up Clara. Myrna is an ex-psychologist. She now runs a new-and-used-book shop in Three Pines. Though the village is not large, it has old-world charm and modern conveniences.

Chapter 3

Saul asks CC about the artist's portfolio. She says it is the work of some pathetic little artist in the village who asked her to show the work around. CC mocks the photographer, and it makes Saul sad. CC wants to get rid of Saul after Christmas, for she now finds him revolting. CC dreams of her own line of clothing and furniture in stores across Quebec. She has purchased the old Hadley House in Three Pines, which was very cheap, because there was a murder there. She wants to shoot a catalog in the village and remake it in her own image. Crie, meanwhile, goes on stage for her pageant. Looking out into the audience, her heart breaks.

CC impatiently explains her book of Li Bien philosophy for life and a company she is beginning called Be Calm. She asks if he has read it. He says he has, and his own annoyance further angers CC. Clara and Myrna end up getting lunch and then split up to do shopping. It is a beautiful afternoon. In front of Ogilvy's, a homeless man throws up on the sidewalk, ruining the effect of the window for Clara. She then heads into the Ogilvy basement bookstore, where Ruth Zardo, her friend and fellow Three Pines



resident, is launching her latest book of poetry. Crie spends the evening crying, heading home finally after the pageant.

Chapter 4

Clara and Myrna visit Ruth, who is a gruff, yet kind, woman. GabriDubeau and his partner Olivier Brule are also present. They have found CC's book in the bargain bin. Ruth finds CC's book pathetic. Some of the other women from Three Pins, also at the signing, including the slim and beautiful Emilie Longpre, elderly Kaye Thompson, and motherly Beatrice Mayer (Mother Bea), are all looking at CC's book. Meanwhile, Saul leaves CC without even a kiss goodbye. CC is relieved to see him go. She briefly reflects on her traumatic childhood, involving a flighty mother and squalid living conditions. As Clara and Myrna begin to leave, they see CC descending the stairs to the bookstore. As CC goes past Clara, CC comments to a man –a famous artist –with her that Clara's artwork is amateur and banal. The artist agrees. It breaks Clara's heart. Clara's worst nightmare is that her art is horrible. She cries. Outside, she brings food to the beggar by the store, and the homeless woman tells Clara that she has always loved Clara's art.

Chapter 5

Myrna is amazed when Clara relates the story to her at the bookstore the next morning. Clara believes it is a sign that God likes her work. She even thinks that the vagrant might have been God Himself.

Chapter 6

As Christmas nears, Clara's mood improves, and things look up. Christmas Eve arrives, and then it comes time for the Midnight Mass at Saint Thomas's. The Church is beautiful and full of happy families. Clara sees CC and Crie. Crie, though very fat, is obviously very happy. After Mass, CC can be heard berating Crie for singing off-key, being fat, and wearing a stupid outfit. The entire congregation is frozen in horror.

Chapter 7

Emilie opens her house for her friends after Mass for a festive party that runs from Christmas Eve through Christmas Day. Gabri picks up CC's book to read aloud from it. Everyone laughs at the writing and makes fun of the idea that emotions are dangerous. At 2:30 in the morning, everyone heads home. Emilie has been conversing with Ruth, who always amazes everyone with the beautiful things she writes, despite her brittle exterior. As Emilie goes to sleep, she suspects that it will be her last Christmas. In bed, Kaye regrets not sticking up for Crie.

On Christmas morning, Clara lets her golden retriever Lucy out. She and Peter open presents. They talk about God. Peter does not believe in God or in people. But, he does believe in Clara. He tells her that her work is worthwhile and beautiful. By the middle of the morning, they are preparing a turkey and wander into the village to the bistro. There, they inquire about a stranger sitting by himself. They figure that he is probably a renter.



The stranger is Saul Petrov. He has come to find the artist responsible for the work in the portfolio. He is mesmerized by the beauty and friendliness of the village. Myrna introduces herself and invites Saul to the community breakfast and curling match the following morning in Williamsburg. It's a fundraiser for the local hospital. Saul is touched and heads out to CC's house, knowing that once he has come to do what he has planned on, he will be able to sit among the villagers at the same table.

Chapter 8

Chief Inspector Armand Gamache and his wife Reine-Marie are in his Surete headquarters office in Montreal. It is Boxing Day. They have a tradition of going through unsolved murder files, looking for clues, on such days. The unsolved murder files are exchanged with files from Marc Brault, Gamache's opposite number in the Montreal Metropolitan Police. Reine finds a file of a murdered homeless woman –the woman who sits outside of Ogilvy's –in the box, believing it must have been put there by accident. The woman, Elle, no last name given, is the victim of strangulation. Among the woman's possessions is a book of poetry, "I'm FINE", by Ruth Zardo. Reine is familiar with Ruth's work and enjoys it. Elle, it seems, has also been collecting letters – Bs, Cs, Ms, Ls, and Ks. The book is dedicated to Elle with love.

Gamache then gets a call from Robert Lemieux, Duty Officer at the Cowansville Police Station in the Eastern Townships. They are acquainted from the Jane Neal case. Reine leaves her husband to his duty. Gamache calls his second in command, Jean Guy Beauvoir, and they head out to the Eastern Townships, an hour and-a-half away.

Analysis

When Louise Penny's novel "A Fatal Grace" begins, Christmas is just around the corner. In the days leading up to Christmas, the reader learns about CC and her secret life –an affair with her photographer. What is interesting to note early on is that this secret life CC is leading will reverberate throughout the novel –not just due to the affair, but to a past that CC invents, giving her entire existence something of a secretive nature. The reader discovers quickly that CC is not a nice person: she is cruel, vindictive, and simply mean-spirited. Even her affair is not a romantic thing.

At the same time the reader learns about CC, the reader also learns about the small, postcard village that CC has relocated to. Three Pines is an idyllic little community full of kind-hearted people who look after one another, and live their lives as though neighbors are more like family than mere friends. This is especially important to consider going forward –that these villagers are deeply attached to one another, and to their village. This concept of a sense of community truly exists in Three Pines.

It isn't long before murder rears its ugly head. Gamache learns that Elle, a bag lady, has been brutally strangled, only to learn a short time later that someone has been murdered in Three Pines. With his trusted inspector Beauvoir, Gamache heads to the Eastern Townships.



Discussion Question 1

Why do you believe CC is having a loveless affair?

Discussion Question 2

What are the implications of the secret life that CC is living, both with respect to her family and her public image?

Discussion Question 3

Do you believe that Clara meets God through the vagrant lady? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

Flaccid, tuque, excruciatingly, ebullient, luminous, idyllic, eluded, banal, vagrant, galumphing, incredulous, fetid.



Chapter 9 - 16

Summary

Chapter 9

Cecilia, or CC de Poitiers, is the victim, murdered on a lake a hundred yards from shore, and near the town of Williamsburg. Gamache and Beauvoir meet Lemieux at the scene of the crime. He explains that CC collapsed during a curling match. Others tried to revive her, believing it to be a heart attack, before rushing her to the hospital. However, the coroners have labeled it a suspicious death. She appears to have been electrocuted. Gamache wonders how it is possible to electrocute someone on a lake in front of innumerable witnesses, and to succeed. Lemieux explains the curling began at 10. Nearly all of the people had arrived by 10:30, and CC and another woman were sitting in chairs by themselves, away from the stands. Among those present were volunteer firefighters, including Ruth Zardo. Olivier Brule, GabriDubeau, Peter and Clara Morrow, are also on scene. Gamache remembers them from the Jane Neal case. Altogether, some thirty people saw it happen. Gamache observes that there is a heating lamp present. Lemieux suspects that CC was probably hooked up to an electric generator and didn't notice because she was watching the game. Speaking aside with Beauvoir, Gamache thinks Lemieux is beyond his depth, but shows promise. Beauvoir and the others respect and look upon Gamache with admiration and awe. Gamache attaches Lemieux to the investigation.

Chapter 10

Gamache first visits with Peter and Clara Morrow. They are happy to see him. He arrives with Lemieux. CC, it is revealed, was transported in the open back of Billy William's truck to Cowansville. Crie and Richard sit in the cab, doing nothing, while strangers do whatever they can to save CC. This annoys Peter. Gamache asks them to recount the day.

The curling charity match was being hosted by the Royal Canadian Legion in Williamsburg. Myrna Landers, Emilie Longpre, Bea Mayer, and Kaye Thompson are all also present to help set up to serve an all-you-can-eat breakfast. It is also Peter's first year for curling, being part of Emilie's team. Peter explains that Mother, Em, and Kaye always sit close to the heat lamp. Clara recalls CC taking the seat closest to the heat lamp, the one Kaye should have had. Clara says she did not like CC, and though she didn't deserve to die, she should have been left alone as punishment for her cruelty to people.

Chapter 11

RuthZardo doesn't think that CC was too bad. Gamache and Lemieux huddle in her cold little house. Ruth thinks there is a reason for CC's cruelty, but nobody knew her



well enough to know. Gamache has been surprised to learn that CC had purchased the old Haldy place. Ruth says that CC's husband and daughter are fat lumps, lazy, and dull. Ruth recounts how Em's team always loses. Ruth, upon hearing of CC's collapse, takes charge of the situation by assigning tasks. She knows CC is dead, but still has to try anyway. Gamache asks Ruth about the inscription in her book, but Ruth says she doesn't remember it. She excuses herself because she says she has an appointment she has to keep. They watch her sit down on a bench in the middle of the village green. Ruth is looking at the three lighted pines in the tree.

Chapter 12

Lemieux tells Gamache he is puzzled by the murder. It is his first murder, but he doesn't understand why someone would use electrocution, rather than a gun or bare hands. Gamache says that everything makes sense –through the killer's eyes. It is their job to find that sense by way of evidence, and listening. They head into Olivier's Bistro. Snow is coming. Gamache tells Gabri he wants to book two rooms in his bed and breakfast. Then, they head to the Victorian mansion known locally as the Old Hadley House. Richard is nervous, having lived on edge with CC for so many years. It is dark and gloomy in the house. Richard is nervous and Crie stares into space. Gamache knows the house is still a tragic house.

Chapter 13

Richard confirms that he, his wife, and Crie were all at the community breakfast. Richard shows Gamache and Lemieux the book, "Be Calm". CC headed up the Be Calm design firm. CC left before Richard was up that morning. By the time he gets to the lake, CC is there with Saul, who Richard says is her colleague, who has rented a place in town for the holidays. Gamache realizes that Saul may have taken a photograph of the murderer.

Clara and Peter discuss the murder. Peter thinks the only person capable of killing CC is Ruth. He explains that Ruth's poetry is about death and darkness. Clara disagrees. Gamache, meanwhile, sees how heartbroken Crie looks. He wonders if the village banded together to kill CC.

Clara, Peter, Myrna, and Gabri meet up at the Bistro. Ruth is also there. Ruth handles the assertion that she killed CC with a grain of salt, humor, and brushes it off. At home, Gamache and Reine discuss the events of the day. Reine finds CC and Richard a strange couple, and wonders why they married. Gamache also reveals how Crie seems to be disconnected from the world. Gamache says he hopes that Richard is not guilty, because he thinks Richard has a good heart, but he is lost and looking for company. Reine finds it strange that CC was not sitting with her family. After dinner, the evidence for the bag lady's murder is brought back out. Elle was a chronic alcoholic, but not a drug addict. He examines photos of her body. He finds a mark on her breastbone, a discoloration different from the rest. He knows what it is from. He looks for something in the evidence box, but cannot find it. He then decides to begin reading "Be Calm."



Chapter 14

Gamache, Lemieux, and Beauvoir assemble in the Three Pines Volunteer Fire Department while other officers and agents begin to set up a situation room. Among them is young and attractive Agent Isabelle Lacoste. Gamache reveals the heat lamp was powered by Billy William's generator in his massive truck. Lemieux points out that most heat lamps are powered by propane, but Billy Williams wired the Williamsburg heat lamp to run by electricity. The generator in the truck is more than powerful enough to kill someone. Autopsy photos are examined of CC. Her hands and feet are charred. The death is by low voltage. For it to have happened, she would have had to have been standing in water without rubber boots and touching something electrified. But, CC's boots are made of seal skin and have metal claws.

Chapter 15

Beauvoir recaps that CC needed to be standing in water, to have taken off her gloves, to have touched something that was electrified, and to have had metal in her boots. Gamache knows that liquid must have been spilled, or the ice and snow must have been melted. But, the liquid could not have been a spilled drink. Anti-freeze wouldn't spill. There is a bluish tint around the chair in which CC sat. The lawn chair in which CC sat must have been electrified.

Lacoste reports that Richard Lyon invented silent Velcro, using a system of magnets – something sought after by the United States military. They end up adding fifteen pounds of weight to a uniform. Richard works as a clerk for a clothing factory. Everyone questions the marriage between the bumbling Richard and the ambitious CC. Agent Nichol appears, saying she has found Saul Petrov.

Chapter 16

Gamache speaks to Yvette Nichol in private. Nichol had nearly ruined their last case, and was a divisive element. Nichol has been assigned to Gamache by Superintendent Francoeur. Nichol has confirmed who Saul Petrov is. Gamaache sends out Beauvoir and another agent to find Saul. As a way to train and test Lemieux, Gamache is sending him to Montreal to inquire about Elle's murder. Gamache then confronts Nichol, who says she has changed, and that she was arrogant and stupid and manipulative. Gamache tells her to leave. He then goes to try to find Kaye Thompson at the senior's home in Williamsburg, only to be told that Kaye has spent the night at Emilie Longpre's house. He goes to look at the lake while he is there. He knows Nichol has been sent to him for a reason, but probably having nothing to do with CC. Gamache calls Francoeur to find out. Francoeur isn't forthcoming. Gamache knows he is being frozen out because of the Arnot case. Friend and Superintendent Michel Brebeuf has warned him that the Arnot case was not finished.



Analysis

The reader correctly guesses that CC de Poitiers is the murder victim. Given the number of people she has humiliated, offended, and hurt, there can be no real shortage of potential murderers, or perhaps even accomplices. The striking thing is that the murder of CC is carried out in broad daylight, before innumerable people watching a very public curling game for charity. Gamache knows that whoever carried out the murder is not necessarily lucky not to have been caught, but very crafty and patient, waiting to strike until the moment was absolutely right. What is even more striking is the way in which CC was murdered: She was electrocuted. Beyond sheer luck or timing, the killer had to make sure a large number of variables were controlled in order to commit the killing.

At the same time that Gamache begins to investigate the murder, attaching Lemieux to the investigation, Gamache's own past begins to catch up to him: the infamous Arnot case, which has been hounding him since it occurred. Gamache has been warned that the fallout from the Arnot case is just beginning, and Gamache knows that the vise is closing around him.

As Gamache conducts his investigation, he finds that nearly everyone he speaks to had some probable cause to want to commit a murder –and this is not surprising given the cruel nature of CC. Especially heartbreaking is the way that CC berated her daughter just outside of church on Christmas Eve, and further adding to the sting is that CC did not attend Crie's Christmas pageant –and didn't even remember it. However, complicating Gamache's investigation is the arrival of Nichol, who is a manipulative and unkind person, who nearly botched the last case. Neither Beauvoir nor Gamache trusts Nichol, for they believe her to be divisive and problematic. The fact that she has been appointed to the investigation by Francoeur, who is no friend to Gamache, only raises the stakes.

Discussion Question 1

Why do you believe Nichol is appointed to the investigation by Francoeur?

Discussion Question 2

What is striking about the murder scene, and the way in which CC was murdered?

Discussion Question 3

Which character appears to have the most likely cause for murdering CC? Explain using evidence gleaned from the novel.

Vocabulary

Cataclysmic, catastrophic, tragic, vile, subtlety, befuddled, odious, senile, artifice, audacity, petulant.



Chapter 17-24

Summary

Chapter 17

Beauvoir tells Gamache that Saul has mailed his photos to be developed, and they will be back the following day. It is revealed that Saul had been photographing CC the entire time and that he saw her touch the chair in front of her. It was Mother's chair that CC grabbed. They do not know why she stood or grabbed the chair. Meanwhile, Lemieux brings a photograph of Elle's hand to an office deep in the bowels of the Surete.

Gamache and Beauvoir walk back to the Incident Room, the command center they have set up. Beauvoir believes Mother Bea is hiding something, but what she is hiding is not known.

Chapter 18

Gamache tells Agent Nichol to come with him. While he waits for her, he speaks on the phone to Lemieux, who is at the Old Brewery Mission. They knew Elle. She wore a pendant around her neck. Gamache apologizes to Nichol for ignoring her. He says he will give her a second chance. Nichol is excited that Gamache believes her, and calls him an asshole in her mind. Beauvoir speaks to Gamache later. He does not believe that Nichol has changed, and thinks Gamache should not believe her, either. Later, Agent Lacoste reveals she has contacted the Paris Surete for information about CC and her family, but the Surete in Paris write back that they think the request is a hoax. Everyone is perplexed. Lacoste has tried the homicide squad in Paris, and is awaiting a reply. A review of the trash from CC's house reveals a video tape of the film *The Lion in Winter*.

Saul paces through his rented chalet. He wonders if he should tell the cops that CC had been looking for money in Three Pines. He holds a roll of film in his hand –the one roll he has not sent off –and it is a roll he thinks will make him enough money to retire and befriend the people of Three Pines. Lacoste, meanwhile, is told to call Aquitaine, the region, to find Eleanor, CC's mother. She decides to run a search on Eleanor of Aquitaine.

Chapter 19

Gamache and Beauvoir go to visit Mother Bea at her meditation center, also named *Be Calm*. Mother Bea explains she believes CC was a lost soul. Sure, CC said she was enlightened, but she was searching, Mother Bea says. CC's book is smug and narcissistic. CC had no real beliefs, but grasped at whatever she could find. Li Bien focused on suppressing emotions to the point of not feeling, because emotions are the root of all problems. Mother believes that if people are calm and quiet, they will find God. Her meditation center, though, does not hold with any one faith or religion, but is



all-inclusive. Outside, Beauvoir throws up, sick to his stomach from the incense burned by Mother Bea.

Chapter 20

Beauvoir is helped to bed in his room at the B&B by Gamache. Beauvoir has the flu. As Gamache leaves, Gabri says he'll be around for a while to keep an eye on Beauvoir. Gamache walks through the village, wondering if he is being lulled into a false sense of security, knowing full well the ramifications of the Arnot case are still developing. He reflects on CC, who seems to have bred resentment. No one seems to miss her.

Back at their makeshift headquarters, Lacoste tells Gamache the coroner will meet him at the bistro at 5:30, for it is on her way home. Nichols left a few hours before. Lemieux wants Gamache to call him. Lacoste shows Gamache Eleanor de Poitiers, also known as Eleanor of Aquitaine. CC's biography in the book lists a privileged upbringing, and her parents as Henry and Eleanor of Poitiers. Henry of Poitiers is Henry II, King of England. CC's real parents are a mystery. Lemieux, on the phone, says that it looks as if Elle had been holding something in her hand when she had died, which is what cut her hand, according to the man who analyzed the photo. The artist has given Lemieux an image of just what it could be, which Lemieux sends to Gamache. Gamache tells Lemieux he has done well, and tells him to come home. Gamache then goes to meet the coroner.

Chapter 21

Gamache meets Dr. Sharon Harris at the bistro. She explains everything is consistent with electrocution except the presence of niacin—from the Vitamin B complex. Though niacin is not dangerous or deadly, it can cause a person to become flushed and overheated. That could lead to the removing of a glove. Niacin is bitter, but easily dissoluble. Coffee or orange juice could mask the taste. Gamache asks Harris about Eleanor and Henry. Harris has no idea about Henry, but remembers Eleanor because of the film *The Lion in Winter*. As Lemieux returns, he hopes he has gained Gamache's trust. Meanwhile, Nichol is also returning to Three Pines, furious that someone in front of her is driving so slowly. It is Lemieux, who lets her pass.

Gamache feels bad for Crie, learning about how she was treated and how she lived. He asks Clara for her Bible. He asks to keep it overnight. *The Lion in Winter* is then put on.

Gamache joins the Morrrows for dinner at their house, along with Myrna and Ruth. Gamache asks to watch *The Lion in Winter*, and Clara readily agrees. Gabri comes over after the film, letting them know that Nichol has checked herself in at the B&B and that she would look after Beauvoir. Gabri has brought chocolate fudge cake. Gamache wonders why a perfectly good video tape would be thrown out and why CC would be obsessed with a movie about power and love being warped and wasted.

Clara later shows Gamache her artwork. There is one image of Mother, Em, and Kaye. She calls the work "The Three Graces". She explains that Mother is Faith, Em is Hope, and Kaye is Charity. She always leaves a little negative space in her works, to let the



light in. Clara says all of her work is about imperfection and impermanence, and that there is a crack in everything. Gamache is impressed by Clara's work, but Clara relates the story about CC and artist and gallery owner Denis Fortin, and how they hated her work. Clara also relates the story of the vagrant woman, though she leaves out the part about meeting God. Gamache then begins to realize the extent of CC's cruelty.

Chapter 22

Gamache realizes he must now find out CC's real identity. He believes the murderer is hiding in her past. Gamache wonders why CC would have adopted Eleanor and Henry as parents. He offers this question aloud to Clara, Peter, Myrna, and Ruth. Childhood dreams and fantasies fade or get replaced. As people leave, Clara shows Gamache the Christmas gift that was purchased for her by Peter. It is a glowing ball with a Christmas scene of three pines and snow. The word "Noel" is underneath the scene. The letter "L" is below the word Noel. He believes it is the Li Bien ball, written about by CC in her book as being painted by her mother. Gamache questions Peter about it. He says he got it from the dump on December 23rd. Gamache realizes that CC's mother was from Three Pines and her initial was L.

Emilie Longpre is reading, and she hopes her book has a happy ending. Mother Bea does not see happiness in the future. Kaye scolds herself for being a coward in life. Clara is furious with Peter for lying about where he got the glowing ball. Gamache sits up beside Beauvoir in his room. He reads the Bible. He believes the quote that Mother Bea has in her meditation from the Bible is attributed to the wrong book, that it is Psalm 46, not Isaiah: "Be calm, and know that I am God." Beauvoir wakes up, feeling mildly better. They discuss the quote. It should be, "Be still, and know that I am God."

Chapter 23

Gamache wakes up in his room at the B&B just before 6. He goes walking to think. Henri, Emilie's puppy, runs up to Gamache. He joins Emilie on her walk. She did not know CC well, but she remembers CC telling Mother that everything she was doing with her meditation center was all wrong. They go to the bistro for breakfast. Emilie recounts inviting CC to her home because she thought CC was lonely, despite her cruelty. She believed CC took her loneliness out on others. Emilie carries a photo of her husband Gus and their son David. They had gone to a competition, but they were killed on the way home when their car encountered black ice.

Chapter 24

Beauvoir and Nichol are getting along better, as Nichol has been helping to care for him. She reveals she has learned that Crie is bright and kind. CC and Richard were living beyond their means. CC had a life insurance policy for \$200,000. They were months away from disaster. Only three women in the village are the right age to be CC's mother: Emilie, Kaye, and Ruth. But, as Lemieux points out, only one has the initial of L. Lemieux is bothered by Nichol, and he doesn't like her. But, he can't quite figure out



why. Gamache tells Lacost to check out Bea Mayer as well. Later, Emilie and Billy Williams teach Gamache and Beauvoir to curl.

Clara soaks in the tub, thinking about what it would be like to have the Director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York show up on her doorstep. She also wonders about the tape of *The Lion in Winter* and why it was thrown out. Gamache, meanwhile, looks at the crime scene photos as Beauvoir attempts to curl. An idea begins to form in his mind.

Analysis

As Gamache speaks to more villagers and learns about CC's reputation and image in the village, he realizes that he needs to understand more about CC herself. He needs to discover just who she was. He invariably realizes that whoever the murderer is, it must somehow be connected with CC's past. If he is to understand the murderer and the motive, he must indeed understand CC's past. But, like her affair with Saul, that past appears to be a secret. She has concocted a false narrative about her past to hide something. The secret that CC is hiding is what Gamache must uncover.

As Gamache learns more about the murder itself, he comes to understand that the crime was precise and perfectly timed. Niacin, found in CC's blood, caused her to overheat, remove her gloves, and expose herself to electrocution at a low voltage. Her sealskin metal claw boots, together with the antifreeze, made her a conductor for electricity. The murderer was brilliant in execution of the crime. It seems like nothing was left to chance.

Gamache first suspects Richard of committing the crime, for he has the intelligence and the know-how needed to carry it out. However, his position during the match, together with the fact that his personality does not allow him to scheme or take such decisive action, means that Richard could not have killed CC. Instead, it had to be someone else. To complete the search, Gamache has CC's past investigated. It is discovered that her mother had indeed been, or might still be, a native of Three Pines. From here, Gamache begins the next stage of his investigation.

Discussion Question 1

Who are the prime suspects thus far? Why are they suspected? Do you believe one of these individuals is the murderer? Why?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Gamache need to learn about CC's past? What does he believe is so relevant about it?



Discussion Question 3

Why do you believe CC has gone to such lengths to invent a past for herself? Is it possible she could be hiding something? If so, what? If not, why not?

Vocabulary

Venerable, maliciously, vindictive, elan, presumptuous, cannibalized, convoluted, dogmatic, fastidious, camaraderie.



Chapter 25 -32

Summary

Chapter 25

Clara goes to see Gamache. She waits for him to return from curling lessons. Gamache and Beauvoir, meanwhile, look at the lake. Gamache believes that the killer waited to electrocute CC until she touched the chair. Billy Williams's cables are indeed the ones used to electrocute CC, for they are blackened at the ends. Furthermore, the killer waited until a moment when all eyes were on curling –when Ma Bea cleared house. The noise generated from clearing the house and cheering would mask the sounds of electrocution. There are questions that remain to be answered such as why CC grabbed the chair at all and why Kaye Thompson didn't see anything. Also, how the killer managed to disconnect the cables, throw them into Billy's truck, and get away without being seen are mysteries. Beauvoir wonders why CC was electrocuted instead of being shot.

Saul's developed photos arrive later. They are viewed by Gamache and the others. The photos show CC nearly purple in the face, gloves off, and then on the ground with Ruth gesturing. Olivier is bending over the body. Some of the photos are missing. Lacoste reveals that Kaye Thompson is too old to be CC's mother, Emilie's child is dead, and Mother Bea is actually Beatrice Louise Mayer. Clara calls Gamache and relates that the tape for Lion in Winter was not worn out, but in good condition. As Saul sees the Surete approach his house, he throws the roll of film in the fire. He feels at peace.

Chapter 26

Saul receives Gamache, Beauvoir, and Lemieux at his chalet. They smell burning plastic, and Saul says he has burned some old film absentmindedly, which makes the other three suspicious. Saul tells them that he and CC were having an affair. He explains it was a purely sexual thing. He believes she moved to Three Pins for money. The sexual affair was payment for photographic services. All CC cared about, Saul says, was money and fame. Beauvoir confronts Saul with the knowledge that the photos between CC being alive and dead on the ice are missing. Saul promises that he gave the officers all the rolls he shot that day. His camera had frozen up, and he was trying to thaw it out. The officers are suspicious, but they leave. Gamache then heads to talk to Kaye Thompson.

Gamache is curious as to why some of the women would have said "Fuck the Pope" at the book signing and why they repeat it sometimes. He knows there is something he doesn't understand about the quote. He asks about what Kaye was saying to CC in some of the photos, and Kaye remembers telling CC to sit still, that CC fidgeted a lot. As Gamache looks through the photos, he realizes how the killer had done his work.



Chapter 27

Clara and Peter Morrow watch the Lion in Winter with Lemieux and Beauvoir. Emilie, meanwhile, drives Gamache to the old Hadley place. There, Richard invites Gamache in. Gamache tries to talk to Crie, but Crie is quiet. Gamache then speaks to Richard about his finances, and Richard is very open about being in financial difficulties. Gamache then says that with the death of his wife and his signature being on the policy, Richard is now financially set. Gamache then confronts Richard, saying that he is an engineer by training. He has all of the know-how required to have killed CC. Richard says he did not do it. Myrna agrees when Gamache speaks to her twenty minutes later. Richard was sitting beside Myrna on the bleachers when CC was killed. They discuss Richard being a passive bystander, allowing his wife to emotionally and verbally abuse Crie. Richard was more than likely verbally and emotionally abused, too. As such, Crie probably feels horrible about herself constantly. Gamache sees Ruth sitting on the bench on the green looking at the three pins once more. Myrna explains that Ruth is on her beer walk. Peter explains the same thing to Lemieux.

Myrna explains that the book that Gamache has of Ruth's poetry was actually originally given to CC and that CC lost it. Clara did smell that day, recalls Myrna. Gamache asks about Clara and the beggar.

Chapter 28

Gamache arrives at the Morrow home as the movie finishes. At minute seventeen, Clara explains, the tape goes strange, worn out from being watched. It is a quiet scene of Eleanor arriving by barge for Christmas with the family. But nothing seems to be unusual about the scene. Gamache then tells Clara about the dead woman and her missing book. It makes Clara sad because she knows the vagrant could not have been God after all. She tells Gamache she thought the vagrant could have been God. The Gamache thinks of the movie, of the barge scene with an eagle-shaped brow on the boat itself. Clara believes she has never met Elle before, and she did not know her.

Chapter 29

Gamache explains to the others that CC's logo is of an eagle, just like in the movie with the barge. The belligerent eagle is Eleanor's emblem. Gamache also reveals that he has discovered why CC had grabbed the chair in front of her. The chair is crooked. CC liked to rearrange things. The chair was out of place to her, so it needed to be rearranged. Gamache then wonders what exactly was photographed – the killer rearranging the chair, perhaps? Everyone agrees that Saul is hiding something. It is possible that he is trying to protect the murderer. Gamache orders his team to look into Saul's background. The object –the pendant –taken off of Elle was a shrieking eagle, according to the sketch. Gamache reviews the items found in the trash. One item was a broken eagle bracelet. Gamache wonders why the vagrant would have struggled so hard to keep the necklace to the point that it cut into her hand. It proves that Elle and CC are connected. It proves that Elle was CC's mother. Ell is "L." Gamache tells the others, and they decide to have the eagle tested for fingerprints and blood. With both



Elle and CC being dead, Gamache realizes that someone is killing the women in the family.

Chapter 30

Gamache, Beauvoir, and Lemieux head out quickly. They head to the Hadley House. Gamache asks to see Crie. He wants to see how she is doing. He then speaks to Richard, saying that they believe they have found CC's mother. A police car and an officer arrive to guard Crie. At dinner, Gamache and Beauvoir discuss the letters B, K, L, and M. Gamache wonders why both Elle and CC had to die. They also discuss Nichol. Beauvoir thinks it is possible she has changed, but Gamache isn't so sure. This makes Beauvoir think of the Arnot case. Gamache tells Beauvoir not to think about it, but Gamache and Beauvoir are both suspicious because of the Arnot case.

Chapter 31

At 2:20 in the morning, the fire alarm goes off. There is a fire along the Old Stage Road. The volunteer firefighters are assembled, and Gamache and Beauvoir awaken. Nichol is also awakened. It is below thirty degrees. The water being sprayed on the burning house is freezing as it is sprayed. The house that is burning has been rented to Saul Petrov. Nichol disappears. Ruth directs the operations to put out the fire. Gamache and Beauvoir enter the house through the root cellar. They work their way up into the burning house, and find Nichol, who is dazed and in danger. She says she is worth it. She gets out, and Gamache and Beauvoir must get out through the window. Saul Petrov is killed in the blaze.

Chapter 32

Gamache and Beauvoir both reflect on the fire. Gamache reflects on what Nichol has said about being worth it. Beauvoir feels as if he is invincible. Yvette Nichol, however, hopes she has gained prestige in Gamache's eyes, and she is amazed that he cared enough about her to want to save her. Then she thinks about how Gamache's main priority had been Petrov, and she is angry at Gamache. Gamache believes that Petrov has been murdered, but the fire inspector says that a lit fire, a clogged chimney, and wood that hasn't been properly dried, were the result of the fire—an accidental death.

Through analysis of blood on the eagle pendant and injuries on CC's hand, Gamache and Lacoste are able to conclude that CC killed her own mother. Crie is thus not in danger. Because they reminded her of her mother, CC threw out the Li Bien ball and the video tape. Both have her fingerprints on them. CC was hoping to sell Li Bien to an American company. But her fantasy parents would be challenged by her real parent. Elle had to die. The only question now is why letters were being collected. Gamache thinks for a few moments. Then, he has his answer.



Analysis

An interesting turn of events brings Gamache face-to-face with Saul Petrov, who insists that he does not know who murdered CC. Also, he insists that he was not the murderer. Gamache and the others are suspicious. However, following the accidental death of Saul Petrov (by burning to death in a fire due to a clogged chimney and wood that has not been completely dried), any possibility that the murderer could indeed be Saul is vanished. Gamache and his officers must refocus their investigation at this point.

The next interesting turn of events has to do with the film *The Lion in Winter*, as it relates to Eleanor of Aquitaine, her barge-like boat, decorated with a carved, aggressive eagle, and her nobility and illustrious ancestry. The aggressive, belligerent eagle becomes the symbol for CC's business. It is also the symbol of Elle, CC's mother. Elle is CC's real parent, and her existence challenges the narrative that CC had invented for herself. Elle, who was apparently not a good mother, due to her flightiness, had to die. CC could not live her fantasy out, so she had to kill her mother.

Gamache's earlier belief that someone has been killing women in the family is put to rest. Gamache must now refocus on CC killing her mother and who killed CC. As Gamache had somehow earlier suspected, CC's murderer has to be in her past somewhere. Now that CC's past is being revealed and understood, so, too, is her murderer--even though the murderer's identity is still unknown.

Discussion Question 1

Why is it impossible for Saul Petrov to be CC's murderer? Explain using evidence from the novel.

Discussion Question 2

What is the significance of the film *Lion in Winter* as it relates to CC and her mother? Why did CC throw out the film and the *Li Bien* ball?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Gamache believe the murderer is connected to CC's past? Do you believe he is correct in this assertion? Explain.

Vocabulary

Lethargic, belligerent, askew, cordial, compulsive.



Chapter 33 - 38

Summary

Chapter 33

Gamache and Emilie meet for coffee. She tells him about the Christmas Eve berating that CC gave to Crie. She recounts sadly that no one intervened. They also speak about God and finding God in the world and people around them. They speak about the Arnot case and how Gamache prevented the superintendent from killing himself and two others, which would have added victims to his list. Gamache only wants justice to be done. Gamache then asks about Elle.

Chapter 34

Emilie reveals the Elle had been their friend. Elle was short for Eleanor Allaire. She was younger than the rest of them. B, K, L, and M are all letters that sound out their names: Elle, Bea, Kaye, and Em. B KLM together is almost “Be Calm”. But Elle went on to collect Cs, for CC. Be Calm is the name of CC’s business, Bea’s meditation center, and Em’s curling team. Emilie recalls that, while everyone else eventually settled down, Elle became more restless. Elle went to India, with Mother Bea. Mother, in French, is “Mere”, and similar to the “Mayer” in Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, MGM, the company that produced *The Lion in Winter*. Mayer is also Bea’s last name. Emilie reflects on saying that words can kill –and CC murdered Crie with words on Christmas Eve. Gamache presses for information about what happened to Elle.

Beauvoir, meanwhile, goes to see Mother Bea. Mother says that CC’s philosophy was a mishmash of different ideas. It was horrible. Bea begins to become worked up about CC and how judgmental and wrong CC always was. He presses Mother Bea on Be Calm. Bea explains that CC showed an unnatural interest in them, and questioned them relentlessly. CC spoke about Li Bien, and only one other person had used that phrase: Elle. And Elle always believed herself to be akin to Eleanor of Aquitaine. The eagle symbol became Elle’s symbol, and when CC arrives, everyone figures out that CC must be Elle’s daughter. While Elle was bright, loving, and kind, CC was dark and cruel. They tried to get along with CC at first, but CC made it impossible.

Em, meanwhile, reveals that Elle and Bea stayed at a commune in India for six months, but Elle became restless and returned to Canada. She was flighty and couldn’t focus on anything for a long time. However, when it came to something that she was truly passionate about, she did focus. Em reveals that every Christmas, she and Bea went to Montreal to see Elle, who lived on the streets, to give her a gift on the 23rd. It was a tradition. They are the ones that called the police over Elle’s death. Gamache presses her, asking her when she knew that it was CC who had killed Elle.

Chapter 35



Beauvoir, Lemieux, Gabri, and Olivier are watching a hockey game. Gamache is on the phone with his wife, filling her in on the details of Elle, and CC being taken from her home to be raised by God knows who, and searching for something stable, something real, in her life. Elle and CC had been searching for one another. Reine asks who would have killed CC –and Gamache tells her. He asks Reine if he has done the right thing with Arnot, by refusing to let him commit suicide, even though the Surete wanted it to happen. Reine tells Gamache that he did the right thing. Reine knows the Arnot case is not over. Nichol, meanwhile, places a call of her own.

Chapter 36

A massive snow storm hits the next morning. Power goes out and emergency generators come on. Gamache receives a two page note at the Incident Room. He heads out in his car toward Williamsburg. Kaye is being taken out across the ice of Lac Brume by Em and Bea, so they will all die in the bitter cold. Kaye says “Fuck the Pope,” a phrase uttered in frustration by her World War I veteran father in the trenches. Words have meaning and can kill. Gamache recounts that no one person could have killed CC without being seen: it was a group effort between Kaye, Bea, and Emilie. Em explains as much in the letter to Gamache.

Chapter 37

Gamache rushes into a restaurant in Williamsburg, at which Billy Williams is also present. He tells everyone that three women are trapped on the lake. The people mobilize to help. They are found. Kaye asks Gamache how he knew. Crie reminded Emilie of her son. When they had heard Crie berated, they knew Crie had to be saved. Gamache explains he figured the niacin was in the tea. Em gave Bea the sign as to when noise would be made by clearing house in the game. Kaye leaned on the chair to make it crooked. The cables had been hooked up to the chair. Gamache learns that Kaye and Bea will survive, but Emilie has died. The three of them were protecting the murderer, who actually connected the cables.

Gamache and Beauvoir go to the Hadley house. Gamache believes that CC married Richard only because of his name: Richard Lyon –or Richard the Lionhearted. The murderer is Crie.

Chapter 38

Gamache and Reine-Marie arrive at the Morrow's for New Year's. Olivier, Gabri, Myrna, and Ruth are already there. Bea and Kaye are recovering. He explains he knew the three women didn't kill CC, but knew who had: Crie. The three caught on when they discovered it was Crie, and worked to protect Crie –from the tea to the final kill –even taking the roles and steps to murder on as their own doing. Crie killed in self-defense, Gamache explains. The child either kills him or herself, or the abuser. After dinner, Gamache sees Lemieux outside, and says he will recommend Lemieux for homicide. Lemieux is floored. Gamache learns about Ruth's beer walk. When animals get old, farmers walk them into the woods and kill them, usually while drunk, to have the



courage to do it. Ruth has killed her own dog, and the dog is buried under the bench. She takes daily walks to visit the dog.

Meanwhile, at Surete headquarters, Superintendent Brebeuf speaks to Lemieux, congratulating him on a job well done, but reminding him that Gamache has to be brought down. Gamache then calls Brebeuf about Nichol. On the way home, Reine-Marie tells Gamache she met a friend of his, Billy Williams. He passes along a bag of lemon meringue pie with a note scribbled on a napkin. The note is about being at peace when finding God.

Analysis

As “A Fatal Grace” comes to an end, it is discovered that Crie is indeed the murderer of her own mother, just as CC was indeed the murderer of her own mother. Crie is a product of her mother’s past and her desire for a modern, fantasy life. Crie bore the brunt of her mother’s verbal and emotional abuse, and the murder was a form of self-defense, as is common in such cases. Indeed, Crie has been so abused by her mother that she has been pushed over the abyss into delusions and fantasy herself. Crie’s crime is covered up by the former friends of her grandmother, Em, Kaye, and Bea, who want to do whatever they can to protect Crie, for they knew how harsh and cruel CC really was.

Gamache explains that in such situations emotional and verbal child abuse the child either commits suicide or kills the offending soul. Crie chose murder. Since she has been driven over the edge, Crie will be sent away and will be taken care of. As Gamache and Bea had talked about earlier in the novel, parents give their children beliefs which they carry with them for the rest of their lives. While CC had fantasies of grandeur, Crie had self-hatred and depression.

Discussion Question 1

Why does CC kill her mother?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Crie kill CC? Do you believe it is an act of murder, or a killing in self-defense? Why?

Discussion Question 3

Should Kaye and Bea be held responsible for their part in covering up Crie's crime? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

Belittled, eviscerated, inflection, placid, labyrinthine, sublime.



Characters

Armand Gamache

Armand Gamache is the Chief Inspector of Homicide at the Surete. In his early fifties and married to Reine-Marie, Gamache is well-loved, respected, and admired by most. He is kindhearted, and an old soul. He is given the task of solving the murder of CC de Poitiers, and almost by accident, the murder of Elle. As he investigates, Gamache is haunted by the Arnot case, in which he exposed a former superintendent against the wishes of the Surete. Forces within the Surete are conspiring against Gamache. Gamache and his right-hand man Beauvoir know this.

Jean-Guy Beauvoir

An inspector under Gamache, and Gamache's most trusted man, Jean-Guy Beauvoir is a competent, capable, and dedicated member of the Surete. Along with Gamache, Beauvoir heads to Three Pines to investigate the murder of CC de Poitiers. While he is there, he catches the flu, and is knocked out of commission for a few days. He recovers quickly, thanks to help from Gamache and some of the villagers.

CC de Poitiers

Ceceilia "CC" de Poitiers is the primary murder victim in the novel "A Fatal Grace" by Louise Penny. She is cold, callous, and cruel, and suffered while growing up. She dreamed that she was the daughter of Eleanor of Aquitaine and King Henry, and married Richard Lyon because his name bore a striking resemblance to Richard the Lionhearted. CC verbally and emotionally abuses her husband and daughter on a regular basis. When CC believes she is about to strike it rich by selling her pseudo-guru and design philosophy "Li Bien" to an American company, she murders her real mother because her real mother stands in the way of the fantasy past that CC has constructed for herself. CC is ultimately murdered by her own daughter, Crie.

Crie

Crie is the daughter of CC and Richard Lyon. As a fourteen year-old, Crie is bright, kind, but morbidly obese. She is the victim of emotional and verbal abuse from her mother. She is relentlessly made fun of at school for her weight. Crie ultimately murders her mother in self-defense.



Richard Lyon

Richard Lyon is the husband of CC and father of Crie. He is an engineer by training, though he works as a clerk. He is a bumbling man, nervous and unsure of himself. He is so bullied by his wife that he can't even stick up for his daughter. CC marries him only because his name resembles Richard the Lionhearted.

Saul Petrov

Saul Petrov is a photographer in his fifties, with whom CC is having an affair in exchange for his photographic services. It is a loveless affair. Saul accidentally kills himself when he lights a fire in a clogged chimney with firewood that is not completely dried.

Lemieux

Lemieux is a local Surete agent assigned to the Eastern Townships. He is attached to the murder investigation by Gamache. He helps to uncover the truth behind Elle's and CC's murders. Because of this, Gamache recommends him for a promotion to the homicide division.

Emilie Longpre

Emilie Longpre is an elderly, pretty woman who lives in Three Pines. She is a longtime friend of Elle, as well as of Bea and Kaye. Emilie and her friends work to cover up Crie's murder of CC. They do so because they are heartbroken and aghast over CC's treatment of Crie. Emilie ultimately commits suicide.

Elle

Elle is the youngest in a group of four friends. Elle is a restless, flighty girl. She travels to India with Bea and returns to Canada, where she is in and out of relationships. She gives birth to CC. Elle is ultimately murdered by CC.

Francoeur

Francoeur is a Superintendent of the Surete. He is out to end Gamache's career, due to Gamache's pursuit of justice in the Arnot case. He assigns Nichol to Gamache during the novel, and Nichol is clearly in his back pocket.



Symbols and Symbolism

Lawn Chair

Lawn chairs are positioned around the heating lamp on Lac Brume for the curling charity game. A lawn chair is electrified by Crie. It is used to electrocute CC.

The Lion in Winter

The *Lion in Winter*, an old film on video cassette, is watched repeatedly by CC, especially the part where Eleanor of Aquitaine arrives on shore on a barge, the prow of which is carved into a belligerent eagle. CC constructs the story that her mother is really Eleanor of Aquitaine.

Sealskin Boots

Sealskin boots with metal claws are worn by CC throughout Christmas and on the day she dies. Their lack of rubber soles and their metal claws guarantee that she will be electrocuted.

Niacin

Niacin, of the vitamin B complex, is found in large amounts in CC's body after death. Niacin is not dangerous, but causes overheating. It is slipped into CC's tea by Crie, which causes CC to overheat. She removes her gloves during the curling game.

Letter

A letter detailing the murder is written by Emilie and given to Gamache. It explains the role that Emilie, Bea, and Kaye had in CC's murder.



Settings

Montreal

Montreal is the headquarters of the Surete. It is the city where Gamache, his wife, and Beauvoir live and work. Montreal is also where Ogilvy's Department Store is located, and it is visited by many members of Three Pines in the novel. Montreal is also where Elle, the homeless vagrant and mother of CC, lives.

Three Pines

Three Pines is a quaint, idyllic village in the Eastern Townships. Three Pines is home to the old Hadley Place, the Morrows, Kaye, Emilie, Bea, and Ruth, as well as others. It is the birthplace of Elle and the town to which CC moves.

Lac Brume

Lac Brume is a beautiful, frozen lake near the town of Williamsburg. It is where the Royal Canadian Legion holds a charity curling match on Boxing Day, where CC is murdered, and where Emilie, Kaye, and Bea seek to commit suicide.

Williamsburg

Williamsburg is a town near Three Pines that is situated beside Lac Brume. Williamsburg is home to the Royal Canadian Legion's post which hosts a charitable curling match each year. It is also the location of a nursing home where Kaye lives.

The Old Hadley Place

The Old Hadley Place is a Victorian mansion on the outskirts of Three Pines. It is a gloomy old house that has witnessed the murder of Jane Neal. It is purchased by CC and her family..



Themes and Motifs

Dreams

The concept of dreams is a major theme in the novel "A Fatal Grace" by Louise Penny. The theme of dreams includes that which human individuals aspire to be or to achieve in their lives. It also alludes to fantasies, often conceived in childhood, that people have about themselves and their lives. Dreams in the novel affect the characters of CC and Clara Morrow.

Clara Morrow is a sweet and kind woman. She is an amazing artist and photographer, who dreams of one day having her artwork hang in a museum, or sold in nice galleries. Clara diligently works away, seeking a market for her artwork. She dreams of being discovered, and dreams of the director of the New York Museum of Modern Art showing up on her doorstep one day to meet her. Clara's dreams drive her on to want to succeed, to thrive in the world, and to do something good and wonderful.

CC, who grew up in squalid circumstances, dreams of being loved and respected for her Li Bien philosophy. She has invented a fantasy past about parents she named after King Henry and Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine. She is a condescending, controlling, and cruel woman, who seeks perfection. She verbally and emotionally abuses her husband and daughter for not living up to her dream of how her life should be.

Friendship

Friendship is a dominant theme in the novel "A Fatal Grace" by Louise Penny. Friendship involves mutual feelings of platonic affection, kindness, compassion, support, encouragement, and loyalty between human individuals. Friendship appears in two primary ways in the novel.

The first form of friendship in the novel has to do with human interaction and community. Throughout the novel, the villagers of Three Pines enjoy the company of each other. They share meals, take walks together, and participate in a curling match together. They give support to one another by doing things like attending book signings. Beyond the villagers of Three Pines, there is a clear sense of friendship between Gamache and Beauvoir. Their relationship is not only a working relationship, but one of genuine friendship.

The second form of friendship in the novel has to do with unwavering loyalty between friends. This is no more apparent than as it exists between Kaye, Bea, and Emilie. The three of them not only keep each other company and care for one another as friends do, but they resolve to cover up Crie's crime. They are even willing to die for it. Indeed, Emilie does die to keep the secret. There can be no truer test of friendship than to commit to another in such loyalty that one's own life is worth the cost of silence.



Justice

Justice is an overarching theme in the novel "A Fatal Grace" by Louise Penny. Justice concerns the moral and rightful punishment for crimes and offenses committed by an individual or groups of people. Justice affects several of the characters in the novel.

For Inspector Gamache, justice means bringing those who murdered CC and Elle to account for their actions, pursuant to the law, both legally and morally. Gamache, for his uprightness, is haunted by the Arnot case, in which he pursued real justice in the midst of a Surete scandal, and for which he is now being persecuted.

Justice, for Crie, means that her mother's cruel emotional and verbal abuse toward her cannot be allowed to continue. Crie, in the pursuit of justice for herself, murders her mother. Such an act could be considered self-defense.

For Kaye, Bea, and Emilie, justice means the protection of Crie when they discover that she is the murderer, even if it means their own freedom and their own lives in the process. They even go so far as to take blame for the crime itself. However, in the end, they only covered it up. Emilie successfully kills herself, while Bea and Kaye almost die, too.



Styles

Point of View

Louise Penny tells her novel "A Fatal Grace" in the third-person limited omniscient perspective. This is done for at least two reasons. The first is that the novel is a murder mystery, and evidence and clues are revealed only over time as the characters discover them. To keep the reader guessing, and to allow the reader to know just as much, or a little less than the characters in the novel, the narration is given limited omniscience. Readers only learn things as the characters do. The novel is told in the third-person due to the wide-ranging, diverse and sheer number of characters contained in the novel. The third person narrative acts as a unifying point between disparate people and places, allowing the reader to more easily handle such distinctions.

Language and Meaning

Louise Penny tells her novel "A Fatal Grace" in language that is simple, straight-forward, and in specific places, poetic. This is done for at least three reasons. The first is that the simple, straightforward language enforces a brisk pace through the novel, allowing the reader to rush along with events as they unfold. The second is that the novel deals with a murder, and so flowery language would be out of place. The third is that the language, when it does become poetic, reinforces parts of the plot that focus on beauty rather than horror -such as discussions of God and tranquility.

Structure

Louise Penny divides her novel "A Fatal Grace" into thirty-eight consecutive, chronological, and linear chapters. This is done in order to allow the reader to easily traverse the chapters of the novel, going from one to the next. This straightforward approach focuses the reader's attention on the plot itself, rather than the structure of the novel, and besides the third-person narrative, also makes transitions between people, places, and events easier.



Quotes

Crie knew from long experience it was always the things you didn't see that were the scariest. And what Crie didn't see broke her heart.

-- Narrator (Chapter 3 paragraph 18)

Importance: At the beginning of the novel, a pattern emerges: Crie is the victim of her mother's selfishness. Rather than attend her daughter's play, CC is off having an affair. That CC is not in the audience to support her daughter breaks Crie's heart.

I suggest we give each other our unsolved cases and spend a few days reading over them. See if we can find something.

-- Gamache (Chapter 8 paragraph 56)

Importance: Speaking to fellow agent Marc Brault, Gamache suggests trading unsolved cases files. This leads Gamache to the murder of Elle, and ultimately, to CC's past. Had it not been for Gamache's idea, he might never have stumbled onto Elle.

But Gamache knew this mystery, like all murders, had begun long ago. This was neither the beginning nor the end.

-- Narrator (Chapter 9 paragraph 62)

Importance: Here, the narrator reflects on Gamache's experience in past murders. All murders, though they happen in an instant, begin long beforehand in some way, shape, or form. As will be seen in coming chapters, this is certainly true of CC's murder, extending all the way back to her own childhood.

Everything makes sense. Everything. We just don't know how yet. You have to see through the murder's eyes.

-- Gamache (Chapter 12 paragraph 84)

Importance: Gamache's fellows cannot understand why someone would choose to electrocute CC in a public place during a public event. They don't believe it makes sense. But, Gamache explains that, to the killer, everything does make sense. They must look through the eyes of the murderer to understand how the murder occurred.

What to do about Yvette Nichol?... She was there for a reason, and the reason wasn't necessarily CC de Poitier's murder.

-- Narrator (Chapter 16 paragraph 123)

Importance: Here, the narrator captures Gamache's thoughts on the sudden appearance of Nichol. Given her near fouling-up of the last case, Gamache does not want to work with her again, yet she has been attached to his investigation. Gamache realizes that she may have been attached for reasons that have nothing to do with the murder, and so he endeavors to remain on guard.



It starts with our beliefs, and our beliefs come from our parents, and if we have a sick parent we have sick beliefs and it infects everything we think and do.

-- Myrna (Chapter 27 paragraph 220)

Importance: Myrna and Gamache are speaking about the things that people believe, and how they grow up to be. In this case, Myrna is referencing CC and Crie, and how everything horrible that CC believed and told Crie to believe, Crie ended up absorbing and coming to believe herself. Everything that Crie does is directly influenced by her mother -including murder.

L was dead. CC was dead. Someone was killing the women in that family.

-- Narrator (Chapter 29 paragraph 233)

Importance: With Elle and CC dead, a clear pattern has emerged. Someone is murdering the women in the family. Crie may be next. But, Gamache has no idea of who the killer might be.

Something had to die, either her dream or her mother. It wasn't much of a choice.

-- Gamache (Chapter 32 paragraph 260)

Importance: Gamache speaks to his subordinates about the dream world and life that CC had constructed for herself. The appearance of her mother was a crack in that world, and CC did not want anyone or anything to kill her dream. So, she killed her mother.

CC didn't live in her mother's shadow, she was her mother's shadow.

-- Mother Bea (Chapter 34 paragraph 280)

Importance: Bea reflects on CC's life compared to that of her mother, Elle. While Elle was kind and good-hearted, she was never cruel or vindictive, even in difficult times. She explains that CC was not feeling inferior to her mother. However, CC's mother would feel inferior because CC was so cruel to her.

She's the end of the line, thought Gamache, the final repository of all the fears and fantasies of her mother and grandmother.

-- Narrator (Chapter 37 paragraph 302)

Importance: Here, Gamache is reflecting on Crie, who has gone over the edge and is living in her own dream world. Crie has become the product of her mother's beliefs and life, as well as that of her grandmother's beliefs and life. Crie is the victim of a cruel trend.