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## Louise Penny's October Newsletter



*"The difference between the almost right word and the right word is ... the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning."*  
- **Mark Twain**

Wow - what an amazing month! And huge thanks to you. Feels like lightning (and not just the bug) has struck.

### HOW THE LIGHT GETS IN Number 1 New York Times bestseller

HOW THE LIGHT GETS IN debuted at #1 on the New York Times bestseller list. Honest to God. I have to tell you, this is not something most writers ever expect to really happen. Not the first time, anyway.

Let me tell you how I found out, and then I'd love to tell you about the tour.

The advance word on the Times list comes out every Wednesday. I was in Austin, Texas, having just done an event at Book People the night before. The next stop was Houston and Murder By the Book.

The plan was for Sarah Melnyk, a great publicist at my publisher, Minotaur Books in New York, to join me on tour in Houston. And it was timed that she'd arrive the day the New York Times word came out. Now, as you might remember, THE BEAUTIFUL MYSTERY debuted at #2....and we thought we might have a shot at #1 with HOW THE LIGHT GETS IN. But there are so many factors! Who else is published, who's on tour, how the Times counts.

So much logistics, so many elements. So exciting and stressful. I know it really shouldn't matter where anyone is on this one list - but the fact is, most writers started as readers....and I grew up passionate about books and always, always looking at the New York Times list every Sunday. And daring to dream, well before I'd even started writing.

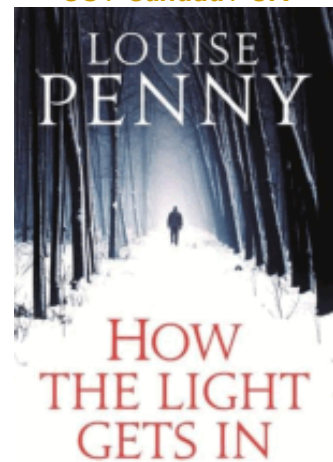
As it got closer to the publication date we thought we might have a shot at the #1 slot. As long as nothing unexpected happened. It got closer. And closer. Through the summer we were all scanning the horizon for 'trouble'.

We were almost there when....

Word leaked that Robert Galbraith was JK Rowling.

Oh oh.

### How The Light Gets In US / Canada / UK



**Click if you wish to pre order**

[Barnes & Noble.com](#)

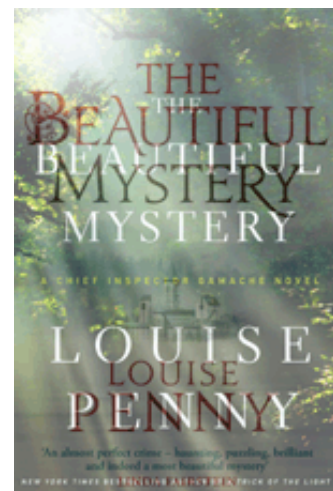
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### The Beautiful Mystery US / Canada / UK



**Click if you wish to order**

Trouble.

And sure enough - and naturally enough - that book shot out of nowhere and landed at #1. And settled in for a long stay.

I don't want to sound melodramatic, but I was pretty crestfallen. But we hadn't given up. We knew HOW THE LIGHT GETS IN was a good book. And we knew you are a great champion. And that's what we needed. Champions.

I arrived in Houston and Sarah was there to meet me. But no word yet on the Times list. We checked into the hotel (the ZaZa - Oh dear lord, a great hotel in a great city), and went to lunch.

And talked about how great it would be to be #2. Or #3. Lowering our expectations. It was important not to feel we'd somehow done badly if we weren't #1. And to be fair, we both really felt like that.

HOW THE LIGHT GETS IN is the very best book I could write. It wasn't written with an eye to the bestseller lists. It was written for you, and for the characters. I'd lived in some fear that I'd be hit by a truck before finishing the book, and so leave you and Gamache and Beauvoir and Clara and Ruth out there. Unresolved. Forever. I even had (now here's the melodrama, at last) a dream that with my dying breath (cue violins) I'd whisper how it ends....

So sad.

Happily, that wasn't necessary.

The writing isn't about sales. But having written, it sure would have been a dream to have started these books with STILL LIFE, where few knew it was even published....and thanks to you, gaining readers with each book.

Until -

Sarah's phone rang. 'It's Andy,' she said and looked at me. Both of us were wide-eyed. I kept saying, #2, #2.... Not daring to hope or dream anymore. Not wanting to feel disappointed.

She answered.

But there was too much noise in the restaurant. We couldn't hear!

Sarah scooped up the phone and we ran outside....too much traffic. We ran into the lobby of the hotel. Too many people. All the time Sarah yelling into her palm - hold on, hold on, as though there was some critically injured creature there.

Then I remembered the business centre. We ran down the hall. It was empty. I closed the door, Sarah put the phone on the desk and we stared at it.

'You're number one.'

And the world stopped.

Sarah and I stared at each other. Then it suddenly felt as though we'd been catapulted off this earth. Her eyes were wide. My eyes were wide. And then we both screamed, and danced. And hugged.

And then I started to cry. And cry. Tears of joy, or relief, of surprise. Of amazement and gratitude. That something so wonderful, something dreamed of for years could happen. The unbelievable had become real.

On the phone I could hear Hope Dellon, my editor, also crying.

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

**STILL LIFE**

**A FATAL GRACE / DEAD COLD**

**THE CRUELEST MONTH**

**A RULE AGAINST MURDER / THE MURDER STONE**

**THE BRUTAL TELLING**

**BURY YOUR DEAD**

**A TRICK OF THE LIGHT**

**THE BEAUTIFUL MYSTERY**

**HOW THE LIGHT GETS IN**

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Nine books. And we made it.

The tears were absolutely for hitting #1 - but more than that, they were about what that really means. They were about writing books that matter to me - and finding they matter to you too. It's not really about units sold - lots of people on that list will sell more books ultimately. It's about having a dream, and achieving it. And doing it without cheapening the books or the characters. Without phoning it in, or writing for the market.

We'd done it. You, me, Minotaur Books. The whole team.

Thank you, thank you, thank you. When I'm 'old and grey and nodding by the fire' - I'll remember this extraordinary time in my life. And smile.

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## BOOK TOUR

Now, about the tour - what a whirlwind! Started with a very, very fun launch part at Boswell Books in Milwaulkee - with poutine and cupcakes with daggers. Then onto Chicago for two events, then Denver.

Have to tell you about what happened in the Denver Hotel. I was staying at the Oxford, and after the amazing event at Tattered Cover I went to bed, and woke up in the middle of the night. Looking over at the door, I saw a figure there. It walked swiftly to the bedside and looked down.

It felt like I was tied to the bed. I couldn't move. I tried to scream and couldn't. I kept saying to myself, It's a dream. It's a dream. Finally, I could move, and I turned the light on. And of course I was alone in the room.

It was a dream. Never the less, I slept the rest of the night with the light on. Next morning I had an early radio interview. Once at the studio the producer, making conversation, asked which hotel I was at. I said the Oxford. Without skipping beat she said, 'Oh, the Oxford's haunted.'

All the blood rushed from my limbs. And I told her what had happened. A similar thing had happened to a friend of hers.

Now, on the one hand it was scary, but it was also oddly comforting. If a stranger could visit, perhaps loved ones can too. And those 'dreams' of my mother and father and others might not have been simply dreams.

The rest of the tour was blessedly ghost free. After Denver it was San Francisco, then Phoenix, Austin (food truck alert!!), the divine Houston (speaking of dreams), then Delray Beach and finally Raleigh, North Carolina.

As you can see from the pictures, standing room only and wonderful crowds. And I had the chance to look you in the eyes and say Thank you.

But the month wasn't over yet. Got home to Michael and Trudy for a couple of days, then off to Saratoga Springs for an event then the world's largest crime readers/writers conference - Bouchercon. It's in a different city each year and this year it was Albany.

Michael joined me and we had a blast! Spent time with writer friends like Rhys Bowen, Deborah Crombie, (pictured with me in the far left photo at the top), Julia Spencer-Fleming, Margaret Maron, Laurie King - and with the amazing Chris Alrich. She and Lynn Kaczmarek were honored at Bouchercon for their contribution to crime fiction, having owned and edited Mystery News for many years.

One of the biggest events on tour was just a few days ago. Here in Canada, probably the most influential media programme is called Q, with Jian Ghomeshi. It's on CBC Radio, though it's also filmed and shown on CBC-TV. As well, 140 NPR stations across the US pick it up, for a total audience of more than 3 million. The show came to Montreal late last week and they asked if I'd be a guest. Of course, I said. And immediately



started panicking. The live audience would be 12-hundred people! Never mind those who'd hear it on the radio. Well, the evening came, and it was wonderful / terrifying / fun / nauseating. But mostly, just terrific. A great audience, a gifted and kind host. And then it was over. But not before I took this photo of Jian and the crowd. Oh, and [here's the link, if you'd like to listen to Q's show in Montreal.](#)

### THE BEAUTIFUL MYSTERY - wins the Anthony and the Macavity Awards

As though all that wasn't terrific enough - THE BEAUTIFUL MYSTERY won both the Anthony and the Macavity Awards, for Best Crime Fiction Novel of the year in the US!!!

I actually began to wonder if an asteroid would drop on my head - after all this great good fortune. Happily, I don't actually think the Universe works that way. I'm not looking over my shoulder - but with Michael, I'm enjoying each and every gift. Keenly aware they're not coming my way because I'm so wonderful - but because I'm so ridiculously blessed. And because I have you as a champion.

These aren't just words. I really do know that. I'm lucky to be able to write...but I'm luckier in the company I keep. Michael, My Assistant Lise, my editors and publishers and agent. My family and friends. And you.

### Vive Gamache - Three Pines new sweat shirts and t-shirts



As many of you know, we have some book-related items that Danny and Lucy at Brome Lake Books sell. We try to choose carefully, and only quality. Thanks to My Assistant Lise, we've just added Vive Gamache sweat shirts (which I love and wear when I'm working - and when I'm not), and Three Pines T-shirts. If you'd like to see the range of items, [just click here.](#)

### London

We're off to London later this month - and you're invited again. Pack the woolies...England in Oct and November can be damp and very cold. But we'll take shelter in Fortnum and Mason.

Oh, that reminds me - when we were last in London we visited the parfumeur Floris and they created a signature cologne just for us called Eau de Gamache. We brought some back as gifts, and we donated one to be auctioned off locally to raise money for the Yamaska Valley Literacy programme. If you'd like to bid on it, [here's the link.](#)

Mostly what I want to offer is my thanks. For the rest of my life I'll remember these days, when lightning struck. Bright and powerful and unforgettable. Thank you for that. I hope your path is also well lit and may your days be good and long upon this earth. And please know we have a community here. Now there is no more loneliness.

With warm embraces, and thanks -

Louise

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