



GLASS HOUSES Chapter 1

“State your name, please.”

“Armand Gamache.”

“And you are the head of the Sûreté du Québec?”

“The Chief Superintendent, *oui*.”

Gamache sat upright on the wooden chair. It was hot.

Sweltering, really, on this July morning. He could taste perspiration from his upper lip and it was only just ten o’clock. It was only just starting.

The witness box was not his favorite place in the world. And far from his favorite thing to do. To testify against another human being. There were only a few times in his career when he’d gotten satisfaction, even pleasure, from that and this wasn’t one of them.

Sitting uncomfortably on the hard chair, under oath, Armand Gamache admitted to himself that while he believed in the law, had spent his career working within the justice system, what he really had to answer to was his conscience.

And that was proving to be a pretty harsh judge.

“I believe you were also the arresting officer.”

“I was.”

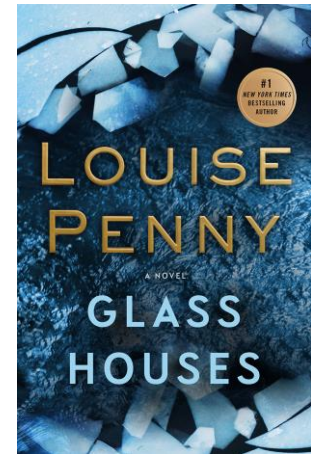
“Is that unusual, for the Chief Superintendent to actually be making arrests?”

“I’ve only been in the position a little while, as you know. Everything is unusual to me. But this particular case was hard to miss.”

The Chief Crown Prosecutor smiled. His back to the rest of the court and the jury, no one else saw. Except perhaps the judge, who missed little.

And what Judge Corriveau saw was a not particularly pleasant smile. More a sneer, really. Which surprised her, given the Chief Crown and the Chief Superintendent were apparently on the same side.

Though that didn’t mean, she knew, that they had to like or respect each other. She had some colleagues she didn’t respect, though she doubted she’d ever looked at them with exactly that expression.





While she was assessing them, Gamache had been assessing her. Trying to get a read. Which judge was drawn for any trial was vital. It could affect the outcome. And it had never been more critical than in this case. It wasn't simply about the interpretation of the law, but the atmosphere in a courtroom. How strict would they be? How much leeway would be allowed?

Was the judge alert? Semi-retired? Biding her time until the cocktail hour? Or, occasionally, not so much biding as imbibing. But not this one.

Maureen Corriveau was new to the bench. Her first homicide case, Gamache knew. He felt sympathy for her. She could have absolutely no idea that she'd drawn the short straw. That a whole lot of unpleasantness was about to come her way.

She was middle-aged, with hair she was allowing to go gray. As a sign, perhaps, of authority, or maturity. Or because she didn't have to impress anymore. She'd been a powerful litigator, a partner in her Montréal law firm. She'd been blond. Before she'd ascended. Taken silk, as they said in Britain.

Interestingly, it was not unlike how parachutists described jumping out of a plane.

Judge Corriveau looked back at him. Her eyes were sharp. Intelligent. But Gamache wondered how much she was actually seeing. And how much she was actually missing.

Judge Corriveau looked at ease. But that meant nothing. He probably looked at ease too.

He glanced out at the crowded courtroom in the Palais de Justice in Old Montréal. Most of the people who might have been there had decided to stay home. Some, like Myrna and Clara and Reine-Marie, would be called as witnesses and didn't want to come in until they absolutely had to. Other villagers—Olivier, Gabri, Ruth—simply didn't want to leave Three Pines to come all the way into the stifling city to relive this tragedy.

But Gamache's second-in-command, Jean-Guy Beauvoir, was there, as was Chief Inspector Isabelle Lacoste. The head of homicide.

It would be their turn to testify, soon enough. Or perhaps, he thought, it would never come to that.

He shifted his eyes back to the Crown, Barry Zalmanowitz. But on its way there, his gaze had brushed by Judge Corriveau. To his chagrin, she tilted her head, very slightly. And her eyes narrowed, very slightly.



What had she seen, in his eyes? Had the rookie judge caught the very thing he was trying to conceal? Was desperate to conceal?

But if she did see it, he knew she would misinterpret it. She'd assume he was troubled about the defendant's guilt.

But Armand Gamache had no doubt about that. He knew perfectly well who the murderer was. He was just a little afraid that something would go wrong. And a particularly cunning killer would go free.

He watched the Crown Prosecutor walk deliberately to his desk, put on his glasses and carefully, one might even say dramatically, read a piece of paper.

It was probably blank, Gamache thought. Or a shopping list. Almost certainly a prop. A wisp of smoke. A shard of mirror.

Trials, like Masses, were theatrics. He could almost smell the incense and hear a tinny, tiny bell.

The jury, not yet wilted from the heat, followed the skilled Crown's every move. As they were meant to. But he was not the lead in this drama. That role was taken by someone offstage, who would almost certainly never utter a word.

The Chief Crown took off his glasses and Gamache heard the slight rustle of the judge's silk robes as she reacted with impatience barely concealed. The jury might be taken in, but this judge was not. And the jury wouldn't be taken in for long. They were too smart for that.