

Graveyards and Gremlins  
November 2019

It has been a while I know, and I'm sorry about that. There are a hundred and one reasons why, but mostly it's just because life got a little crazy this year. Anyho... moving on from that particular can of worms, let's talk instead about 'La Famille Lacroix' and how it is one of my favourite of the Hugo investigations. I'm not even sure why, other than after setting the previous book entirely in Russia it was nice to be back in Montgenoux with the characters I have come to know so well. I'm not sure if it's even possible or sensible to miss them, but I did. I missed the simmering tensions of love on the cusp of being realised/not realised between Renaud and Miriam or Markus and Marianne, the quiriness of Mare-Louise and Etienne, the friendships Hugo never thought he would have, but whatever it is, it was good to be back. The love story of Hugo and Ben which seems to have touched people so deeply to my amazement. But of course, these are murder mysteries, so there isn't a lot of scope for it to be completely warm and fuzzy.

Looking back at my original notes, I wanted this book to touch upon racial tension. I was listening a lot to the Barbra Streisand album "Walls," a not so veiled attack on the era of Trump. The sentiment touched me, the lyrics moved me and of course the voice inspired me. The ideology fit perfectly with my vision for the book and became its unofficial soundtrack. The truth is, the differences between us should be celebrated but most often are not. There has always been a danger of people hating what they don't understand.

The book opens in a flashback to the end of World War II when a young girl is fleeing Nazi Germany, smuggled into a new, safer home in rural France... ie Montgenoux. However, life isn't always so easy, flash forward to modern day and a terrible tragedy ignites new racism which hits Hugo particularly hard. Through Hugo I wonder, have we really learnt nothing about living our best, most decent, most honourable life, must we always blame others just because they are different to us? I don't profess to being wise enough to have any of the answers, because I don't, but I do hope by bringing it into my relatively decent, staid world of Montgenoux it might just give us a pause for thought. Hugo certainly tries his best to navigate the complicated world of racial tension and he doesn't entirely succeed, finding himself practically ostracised because of his desire to bring the town together. Anyway, I like it and hope you do too.

I promise I won't be such a stranger next year, I've been busy doing a bit of navigating of my own, but Christmas is approaching and before the year is out, we not only have the Lacroix book, we also have the Spanish and audiobook versions of the 'un homme qui attend.' I can't wait for you to hear the audiobook, it's beautiful and in Henry Douthwaite we have found an actor who pays great tribute to Hugo and all in Montgenoux. I'm really looking forward to hearing what he does with the rest of the stories.

Thanks for reading, and listening!  
Much love, and wishes of good health and peace of mind. See you in the 20!  
Gary