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Penney, Stef. The Tenderness of Wolves

The icy chill of a 19th century Canadian winter is palpable throughout British author Penney?s accomplished debut. Seventeen-year-old Francis Ross disappeared from the town of Dove River on the Georgian Bay the same day his mother discovers the scalped corpse of the boy?s friend Laurent Jammet, a fur trader and former employee of the all-powerful Hudson Bay Company. The sensational murder brings outsiders to the small community: young, earnest Company representative Donald Moody, who?s there to help investigate the crime; and aging former tracker and Native American sympathizer Thomas Sturrock, who hopes to recover a carved bit of bone that had been in the trapper?s possession and which might provide valuable archaeological proof of an ancient Native written language. Unfortunately for Mrs. Ross, there are no obvious suspects other than her missing son?until half-Native trapper William Parker is caught searching the dead man?s house. When Parker is released, Mrs. Ross enlists him to help her go after her son and whoever her son had followed into the wilderness, hoping to prove Francis innocent of the crime.

Atmospheric and complex, the intertwined stories of Penney?s vibrant cast of loners and outsiders are absorbing, and Penney?s choice of time and place is a perfect backdrop.

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