

*Meet
Sergeant
Windflower
in The
Walker on
the Cape*

The Walker on the Cape

by Mike Martin

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Mike Martin

THE WALKER ON THE CAPE



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Grand Bank Lighthouse reprinted
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Chapter One

Even in an ordinary life the most extraordinary things can happen. Every morning for the past eleven years Elias Martin had his breakfast of hot porridge and thick molasses bread smothered in partridgeberry jam. Then, rain or shine, he began his solitary walk from his small blue house on Elizabeth Avenue in Grand Bank, Newfoundland down through the Cove, and until the winter snow made it impossible, up over the hills to the Cape.

This solitary pilgrimage allowed him to mourn his wife Eileen without anyone intruding on his grief. More importantly, it allowed him to talk to her without anyone thinking he was crazier than he was. This walk was one that they had shared for almost forty years until she took sick and he still missed her and still needed to feel her comforting presence. He thought that her long, painful, and ultimately fatal battle with cancer would be the worst part of his life. Now he knew that being without her was even worse.

People along the coastline in Grand Bank could set their clocks by Elias Martin. Every morning, even when the fog floated in from Fortune, they saw his hunched figure climb and disappear in the mist that ran the shoreline like a rum runner. You could put a pot of soup on to boil when he set out and be sure that when he appeared again that the potatoes, carrots, and turnips would be soft and sweet.

Mavis Emberly was one such soup-maker who relied on Elias Martin to set the pace for her weekly batch of pea soup. "There he goes," she remarked to her husband, Francis, "Time to put the soup on".

An hour and a half later Francis Emberly muttered, "Something's burning in that kitchen, maid." Mrs. Emberly ran to the kitchen to turn off her black bottomed soup with a smattering of non-religious but surely immoral curses and immediately realized that something else was wrong besides her spoiled soup. Elias hadn't returned. "Or else I missed him," she decided.

It wasn't until the next morning that the rest of the world discovered what her burnt pot of pea soup had already signaled. Elias Martin was found stone cold dead by a pair of hiking tourists, lying silently on the well-trod path that he and Eileen had travelled together for so many years.

"A heart attack" was what all the neighbours told themselves as they huddled over coffee at the local café and rumour mill. "A stroke" was whispered by the church ladies as they left the garden party planning meeting at the Anglican Church. But even as the now late Elias Martin's body lay on a cold slab at the local clinic, some of them suspected that something or someone else had been involved in the death of the solitary walker. The only one who knew for sure was Elias Martin and he sure wasn't talking. Who would finally unravel the mystery of the Walker on the Cape?

Chapter Two

That task would fall to the local gendarme, headed by Sergeant Winston Windflower of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Windflower was a full-blooded Cree from the Pink Lake Reserve in Northern Alberta who had been on assignment in Grand Bank for just over a year. He was worried about handling his first big case in this small Newfoundland community but it sure seemed a welcome break from chasing the teenagers who had taken to drinking beer underneath the wharf every warm night during the spring and summer.

“So where do we begin, Sarge?” asked Constable Eddie Tizzard. Tizzard, the local boy made good, was excited at his chance to show the townsfolk that he had more than the shiny red serge and polished brown boots working for him.

“Easy, Constable. We have to make sure we get this right. Let’s start at the beginning. Talk to the tourists who found Mr. Martin and then head over to see Doc Sanjay at the clinic. If it was a heart attack or stroke he should be able to verify that for us, and we can wrap this up by lunchtime.”

Tizzard almost said “I hope not,” but judging by the stern look on his Sergeant’s face he rethought that strategy and simply said “Sure thing, Boss,” grabbed his hat and headed out the door.

Windflower wasn’t sure it was a heart attack either. Something gnawed at his gut that told him there was more to this story than a simple coronary failure. But he kept his own counsel and simply nodded to his eager subordinate as he left the office. He decided to head over to the best source of informal information, the Mug-Up Café, for a cup of strong black tea and a snoop around.

“Morning, Sheila,” he called as he spied the owner of the café struggling to balance three mugs of coffee and multiple orders of thick, homemade toast.

“Morning, Sergeant,” Sheila smiled, blushing a little from the exertion of her load but more from the sight of this dashing young Mountie. Something about a man in uniform, she thought.

“A cup of tea when you get a chance,” he said, returning her smile. That was pleasant, he thought to himself, and then just as quickly put his official game face back on. This was no time to give the regulars any reason to doubt his professionalism.

Windflower settled into a small table near the counter, a great place to watch everyone who came and went, but more importantly the best location to gently eavesdrop on the hushed conversations that were happening in every corner of the café. They had all seen him come in, but he had learned that people’s basic need to gossip overcame almost all of their other emotions, especially if they have a juicy piece of news to share with their fellow gossip-mongers. Sheila had just brought his steaming mug of tea with an added twinkle when his cell phone rang.

Every eye in the place turned on him at once as he asked the café owner if he could take the call in her small office at the back.

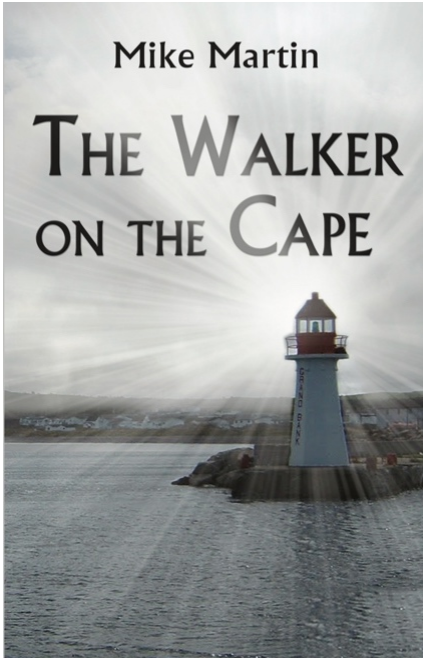
“Sure, Sergeant, anything for the Mounties,” said Sheila, beaming.

Windflower hurried to the back and spoke to his constable. “What’s up, Tizzard?”

The Walker on the Cape

“Sarge, I think you should come over to the clinic and hear what the Doc has to say for himself,” said Tizzard.

“Stay right there, Tizzard, I’m on my way,” said Windflower.



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