

APOCALYPSE – Cape Breton Island

APOCALYPSE
Cape Breton Island

MIKE SENCZYSZAK

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*For Melina
and Natasha.*

FORWARD

This novel is a stream of consciousness piece.

‘Apocalypse – Cape Breton Island’ is a work of fiction, although the natural beauty of Cape Breton Island is fact. Locations, establishments, persons and events referred to in this book are not meant to represent reality; rather they are a blend of the author’s imagination and fictional embellishment.

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“I have travelled around the globe. I have seen the Canadian and American Rockies, the Andes, the Alps and the Highlands of Scotland, but for simple beauty, Cape Breton outrivals them all.”

Alexander Graham Bell

CHAPTER 1

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

The snipers are gone, or dead, one of the two. I haven't heard a shot or sensed their presence in days. I'm not sure if that's a good thing or not. If they're dead on the island, if no one's left to make sure survivors don't cross the waters, I don't know if there's any worth finding out the truth.

I sling my binoculars and straighten up. A hundred feet before me, splayed on a rock face, is Hans, dead, decaying, providing a well-needed feast for the sea-bearing gulls, monstrous birds that dwarf the inland gull population. Hans is the name I've given the poor sod, who in better days, before he took a bullet to the cranium, looked to be a tall, blonde-haired Swede, golden mane like Fabio, a physique to match. He wore army fatigues, a Swiss backpack on his shoulders, pump-action shotgun slung across his back. I can only assume he pushed his luck, pinning his hopes on a one-man dingy as his transport, the kind you buy at Canadian Tire; maximum capacity two adults, but in reality one dwarf—unless sinking is your intent. By my speculation, he'd waited until after dark, when any remaining lights on the island dimmed. He crouched and bided his time, not daring to light a smoke or check his watch for fear the tiny glow would expose his intention. Hans was alone, no vehicle I could see, no backup, no stash of supplies other than the backpack, one I've long since ransacked and discarded. Within in it he had the staples; canned

food, ammunition, Bowie knife, flashlight, First Aid Kit, lighter, and a carton of cigarettes. I'm not a smoker, at least I wasn't, but lung cancer is no longer a concern of mine. Hell, I could be in stage four, cancer metastasized beyond all hope, and it wouldn't make a fucking difference. My days, our days, humankind's days, are numbered.

At least that's what I figure.

The putrid goop of pink brain tissue has long since turned black, a fly-fest. Hans is decomposing, and not in a good way. The birds have turned what remains of his head and neck into a banquet, a free-for-all, snippets of his vertebrae glistening like ivory, even from this distance. Every now and again the wind off the Straight dies down, and I get a whiff of reality. I can't shake the feeling, watching his corpse, smelling his rot, visualizing his soul, lost in oblivion. Who was he? What were his intentions? Why did he survive the sickness only to be splattered by a high-powered lead equalizer?

As I fumble out a smoke, I glance at the lighter, another of Hans's possessions, a shiny Toronto Maple Leafs logo emblazoned on the front. Hans was a Leaf fan. Too bad he'd never see them win a Stanley Cup. Not because he was dead—because the Leafs were dead. Hockey was dead. Society was dead.

I light my smoke, peering across the water, scanning for movement, but I know there will not be any. I glance to my right, the Causeway jammed to the hilt with abandoned tractor-trailers, barbed wire, and booby traps, a stoic reminder that mainlanders were no longer welcome on the island.

The initial pull on the cigarette causes a slight dizziness followed by a welcomed comfort. I'm a smoker now, thanks to Hans. I suppose if he'd had some weed or coke, I might be a junky. Who gives a shit, old age is not a concern. Not anymore.

A seal's head pokes out of the water fifty metres out. A second head appears. What do they know of man's demise? Do they care? I set my cigarette down and reach for my binoculars. Something is moving on the island.

Goddammit, I'm not fucking alone.

I flatten, shielding myself behind the boulder, the one with bullet marks, likely from the last poor soul who sought refuge in this exact spot. Could the snipers be back? Shit. It may have been a large animal. Bears aren't unheard of in Cape Breton, neither are coyotes. Hell, I imagine the wild dog population has seen a resurgence. There's no longer an endangered species list, other than humanity. I'm the endangered one.

Had to be an animal. Maybe a deer. I raise my head and angle the binoculars, scanning, panning, as I've done every day for the past two weeks. Nothing. But I can't risk it. It won't be tonight. I don't want to end up like poor Hans, rotting away, providing a heavenly feast for scavengers; I'm not going out that way.

Reaching for my cigarette, I take a final pull and stand, careful to keep myself concealed. I grab my pack and turn.

“Later Hans.”

In seconds, I'm down the embankment. Another day on the mainland won't kill me, at least I hope not. Any motherfuckers who survived the sickness are not my friends, nor am I theirs. This much I've come to realize in a short time. It's the way of the world now.

As I approach my vehicle, I scan for movement, an ambush, always wary of letting my guard down. I press the remote and the RV's lights flash, giving me the all clear. It's time to head back inland, towards Guysborough, away from the dangers of the Causeway, back into hiding.

