

JAMES DEAHL

AUTUMN SUNSET, ST. PAUL'S

Only three hundred villagers, perhaps a few more during the summer, still both Catholics and Anglicans manage to keep faith alive at the edge of the Gulf, where winters run long and the growing season's almost too brief to count. Just a fishing outpost wedged between the Long Range Mountains and the sea. A harsh life wrapped in a harsher beauty, for even winter prefers the beauty of power, the beauty of storm tides surging up the inlet. On the west coast of Newfoundland winters rove unrestrained. This is a power their ancestors grew to love, a love these fishermen have come to inherit. But today brings full autumn, its equinoctial gales subsided, and the sunset flares a glory of salmon, indigo, and purple. With the sun sunken below the horizon, these colours seem to emanate from a shadowed spot in the heavens, and they run burning, a dark sonata spread across sky and water. In the silence of a calm evening, the colours stretch far beyond human vision, go all the way to Quebec. The cold waters of the Gulf deeply breathe and exhale the sunset as they flow towards Labrador. Throughout the ghostly solitude of autumn, these waters sing whether anyone listens or not.