

Senior Division, Non-Fiction

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### **Most Easterly Point (an excerpt)**

There's a lighthouse at the top of the hill. Not the tall, modern one operated by the Canadian Coast Guard, but further back, that cozy white domicile overlooking the cliffside, where generations of families lived a remote existence, their steadfast purpose to guide ships on the way to St. John's harbour. On a quiet day at the Cape, when the fog is adamantly dense or the rain is crashing down in sheets, this lighthouse makes the perfect hideout. Halfway up the stairs, a wooden perch offers an irresistible vantage point, where a person can sit with their back against the wall and watch the landscape unfold through a round glass window facing east. This is where I come to rest, in between busy tour groups or swarms of cruise ship passengers who must barrel through the site at break-neck speed. I have watched whales breach from this landing, thrusting themselves up out of the sea with a force that distills my beating heart.

The light station at Cape Spear has offered tender guidance to weary travellers since long before the term *Come From Away* appeared in the Dictionary of Newfoundland English. Every evening, the light-keeper would refill the oil lamps that had burned steadily throughout the previous night, and each morning, he would wake up and scrub those blackened glass chimneys that were placed over the flames, rendering the light taller and brighter, a more helpful guide in those offshore squalls. When the light-keeper was sleeping, his assistant was on the job, winding up that clockwork mechanism every 3 hours to keep the apparatus turning. There was never a moment when the light was unmanned, and I like to think of this as one of humankind's greatest examples of caretaking. For centuries, a kerosene-kindled love for strangers has led people to safety across turbulent oceans. I am unsure if we lost that love somewhere along the way, or whether the kindness turned into threats when *strangers* became the *people next door*. But, from my perch in the lighthouse, watching the modern tower flash before my eyes every 3-7-15 seconds, I hold onto hope that there is compassion preserved in those photons, cast out to the place where ocean and light waves converge in a resonant harmony.