



# The Island Walkers: A Novel

*John Bemrose*

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**The Island Walkers: A Novel** John Bemrose

**A powerful first novel about a family that slips from fortune's favor and a town broken by the forces of modernity**

Across a bend of Ontario's Attawan River lies the Island, a working-class neighborhood of whitewashed houses and vine-freighted fences, black willows and decaying sheds. Here, for generations, the Walkers have lived among the other mill workers.

The family's troubles begin in the summer of 1965, when a union organizer comes to town and Alf Walker is forced to choose between loyalty to his friends at the mill and advancement up the company ranks. Alf's worries are aggravated by his wife, Margaret, who has never reconciled her middle-class English upbringing to her blue-collar reality. As the summer passes, Joe, their son, is also forced to reckon with his family's standing when he falls headlong for a beautiful newcomer on a bridge—a girl far beyond him, with greater experience and broader horizons. As the threat of mill closures looms, the Walkers grapple with their personal crises, just as the rest of the town fights to protect its way of life amid the risks of unionization and the harsh demands of corporate power.

Superbly crafted and deeply moving, this remarkable debut follows the Walkers to the very bottom of their night only to confirm, in the end, life's ultimate hopefulness. *The Island Walkers* is at once a love letter to a place, a gripping family saga, and a testimony to the emergence of an important new novelist.

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