



CHAPTER ELEVEN

Before I get back to the Coasties, I'd better explain what the geography is like once you're free of the Fisher.

Whitlock Bay is a funny one. Instead of facing east towards Portugal and Spain and countries where people eat a lot of garlic, it faces north towards Canada. It's kinda like a bowl of water wedged between the Great Marsh on the left and Cape Mary on the right.

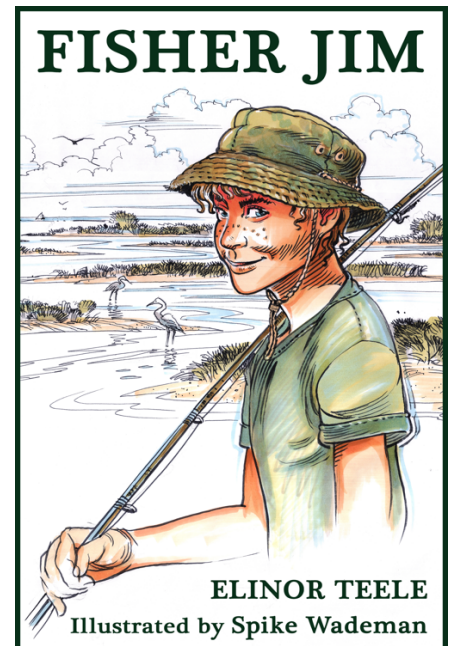
Cape Mary is this big hunk of granite that sticks out from the coast. And since the Bass River runs right around the inner edge, most people call it the island.

It's a lot easier if you look at a map.

Anyway, I'd finally made it to the Bay.

And I was scared.

I've never been a fugitive from the law. Sure, I'd been in trouble before. Done my fair share of solitary confinement. Spent a few months in the principal's office.



About Fisher Jim

A Free eBook for Kids Ages 8-12

Written by Elinor Teele

Illustrated by Spike Wademan

About Elinor Teele

elinorteele.com/about

About Spike Wademan

spikewademan.com

More Books by Elinor



But this was different. I'd never beached a Coast Guard boat off the tip of Kramer's Neck.

Now, to be straight, it wasn't exactly me who beached it. It was the Skipper who made the rookie mistake of crossing the bar.

But I was the one who showed him my underpants.

I was beginning to feel a lot like Granddad's old cat, Sherman. Sherman had a habit of provoking the neighborhood dogs. Every time he saw one pass, he'd jump on the porch railing and prance around like a ballerina.

Then, when the dogs were fit to burst, he'd leap down and nip through the catflap. A dog would charge after him and get its head jammed in the door.

It was funny for a while. Until you realized someone had to get it back out again. Grabbing a rabid dog by the hindquarters is not a lot of fun.

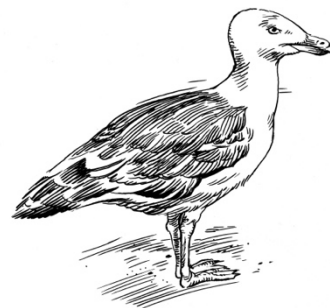
I knew the Coasties had a couple of hours before the tide lifted them off the bar. Then they'd be back on the water, madder than stink.

Yep, there was no doubt about it. Flashing my drawers was somewhere in the top ten of the most numb-knuckle things I'd ever done.


I was also beginning to realize that the Coasties wouldn't be the only ones out looking for me. I'd been gone for the whole morning. Da and Granddad must have missed me by this point.

Maybe they'd borrowed a boat and were out searching for me. Maybe they'd enlisted some of their mates. Maybe they were bringing in the Navy. At this point, heading for the usual family striper holes would probably be a bad idea.

Mom used to say that when the going gets tough, the tough get going to Garret's Cove. That happened to be dead ahead, about five miles due east on the coast of Cape Mary. I had half a tank of gas, a clear channel, and the whole of Whitlock Bay to cover. It was time to make tracks.



Once I was on my way to Garret's Cove, I began to feel just a little bit better about the world. The Bay was as sparkly as New Year's Day. The wind was tipping her waves with a tiny smidge of white and the sun was sliding off the sides in rainbows. You can think big on water like this.



Better yet, there was nobody around to speak of. A few sails off on the horizon, a couple of gummy gulls—the usual suspects.

I'd covered half the Bay before I spied another boat. And this one was probably in more trouble than me.

It was the Gertie.

The Gertie is captained by Ollie the Greek. Ollie's not really Greek, but he got into the habit of saying that feta cheese is the most disgusting food that God ever created. So his friends decided to stuff twenty pounds of feta in his cabin. He's been the Greek ever since.

Ollie is a scalloper. At least, that's what he calls himself. See, the thing is, he doesn't go fishing much. He keeps the Gertie tucked up in Bass Harbor, at the bottom of Whitlock Bay.

And that doesn't make any sense. Because Bass Harbor is a rinky-dink little place—full of catboats and whalers and skiffs. All the other scallopers keep their boats over in Peterborough, which has a much deeper harbor and a lot more bars.

Also, Ollie has a habit of going out at night and coming back at strange times of the day. Like five in the morning. Last year, Da and I were out catching the sunrise when we heard his wheezy voice come over the radio:

“Fail to copy.”

“Gertie, Gertie, this is the U.S. Coast Guard. Heave to and prepare to be boarded.”

There was a bit of static and then...


“Coast Guard, this is the Gertie. We're coming in with a full load. Wanna get our catch on the docks ASAP.”

“Gertie, Gertie, this is the U.S. Coast Guard. I repeat. Heave to and prepare to be boarded.”

“Coast Guard, this is the Gertie. We seem to be having trouble with our ice. Boz over at Peterborough must have sold me stuff from the bottom of the barrel, cause the water in the hold is up to our waists. We're gonna lose these scallops if I don't get a move on.”

“Gertie, Gertie, this is the U.S. Coast Guard. I REPEAT. Heave to and prepare to be boarded!”

“Yeah, Coast Guard, this is the Gertie. Turns out Tony has stuck a bluefish hook through his face and we need to head straight for the hospital. I mean, his cheek is turning pukey green and everything.”



“Gertie, Gertie. THIS IS YOUR LAST WARNING! If you do not stop your engines IMMEDIATELY, you will be fired upon.”

Da and I were drooling to hear what happened next, but there was only crackling on the radio. I suppose I could’ve asked Ollie, but he disappeared for the next nine months. Da says he was spending quality time on the dime of the state. Which seemed to me like a dumb way for the state to spend money.

I wasn’t in the mood for one of Ollie’s lectures on cheese, so I throttled back and watched the parade pass me by. He must have been doing something with fish—the Gertie was circled by a tornado of seagulls.

As Ollie headed towards Bass Harbor, I got to reflecting. It’s kinda sad that there aren’t many boats like the Gertie left. Yeah, she’s got rust through her steel, breaks in her chains, and paint peeling off her bottom, but she’s still going out there. Most of the Peterborough crews fishing for cod and yellowtail flounder have given up. Reg-u-lations have beat them into the ground.

Mom and Da argued about it a lot. Mom would say that you gotta preserve the fish that are still left and Da would say that those are the ones being snapped up by the offshore trawlers and foreign fisheries.

Then Mom would shout that he should read something about the environment and Da would yell that he didn’t need a lecture. Then Mom would slam the screen door. Then Da would smash the plates in the sink.

I don’t know what the answer is. Maybe folks who want to eat fish should have to catch their own.

That’s certainly what I was planning to do. And no boat on the Atlantic was gonna stop me.