

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

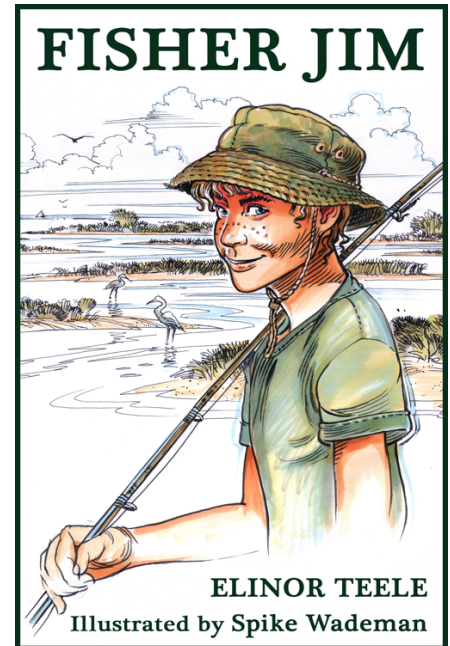
A Newfoundland wind hit me broadsides as I slammed down the lid of my tackle box and hauled up the anchor. I knew there was gonna be sixteen different kinds of hullabaloo to pay when I got back, but I didn't care. I was fed up with the whole experience.

I checked the sky. I reckoned I had about half an hour before the rain set in. Enough time to get me across Whitlock Bay if I pushed hard. Once I was in the Fisher, I could navigate the Rita Anne blindfolded and with one hand tied to the deck.

Pepper's hot lobster was out. Everyone in Folly Cove would be scrambling for shelter. This was developing into a blower.

I pointed the Rita Anne into Whitlock Bay and gunned the outboard. Despite the worry, it was sorta fascinating to watch the weather set in.

On my port side, the sky was dull and grey. But on my starboard side, the clouds were doing some effed up kinda Greco Roman wrestling. I mean, these things were spinning on their heads and twisting their feet round their necks and generally getting ready to take you down.



About Fisher Jim

A Free eBook for Kids Ages 8-12
Written by Elinor Teele
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About Elinor Teele

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I didn't like the look of them *at all*.

I knew things were bad because I was holding my breath. When I get really scared, my lungs forget how to work.

One time I held my breath so long I passed out on the floor of my second grade classroom. I was watching this cricket that was about to be eaten alive. Then everything went black.

I woke up with my teeth smushed up against Mrs. Baedeker's fake pearls. She thought I was dead.

Anyway, what with the clouds and the waves and the wind, I figured I needed what Da calls a "calm-me-down." So I started talking to myself, nice and low, like he usually does.

"It's okay," I said to me. "It's okay. You've got a good boat under you and a clear shot ahead. You can even see the mouth of the Fisher. Just stay true to your course and..."

Phfft.

After thirteen hours, THIRTEEN HOURS, of seeing me up creeks and round islands and through the Bay, my outboard—that little engine that could—turned up its nose and carked it.

Dead.

Gone.

Kaput.

And you want to know the real kicker? You want to know why the engine picked this moment to give up the ghost?

Not because of the fuel filter, oh no.


Not because of a loose worm clamp, not a chance.

Nope, it died because of one simple flaw.

It ran out of gas.

And why did it run out of gas?

Because I forgot to fill the tank in Garretville, that's why!



Yes, that's right. I'd spent so much time thinking about Mom that I'd forgotten to take care of the most important task of the day.

I'll admit it—right there and then I wanted to die. I wanted to stand at the bow, strip off my shirt, and say, “Here, gods, take me. Take this moron who can't remember to unscrew a fuel tank cap and feed him to the fishes. He'll be a darn sight more useful on the bottom of the ocean than he will be on the top.”

I'd no sooner think this when a monster of a wave came crashing over the side. In five seconds, I was up to my ankles in saltwater.

Fortunately, the cold woke me up. I stopped babbling like a bad action hero and started acting like a Tucker.

To begin with, I went looking for Granddad's oilskin. It's this orange slicker that Da carries in case of emergencies. I found it in the locker under the middle seat and put it on.

And almost tore it off. I don't think that thing had been used in centuries. It smelled like mold, bleach, fish bait, and salt. It's not a com-bi-nation I'd recommend if you're thinking about developing a perfume.

But I scrunched my nose and kept it on. Da always says that the wet can kill you faster than the cold.

Once I had the coat zipped straight and the hood up, I layered my lifejacket on top. I wasn't planning on spending the next few hours in the drink, but the sea might have other ideas.


Then I made sure that all of my gear was tucked up tight and out of the way. I might be doing some sudden moves up and down the deck and I didn't want to be tripping over my rod.

And that was it. The line on Pepper's anchor was far too short to reach the bottom of the Bay, so there was nothing left to do but bail.

The rain was beating down so hard that it was ricocheting like bullets off the water. The wind was making a noise like a freight train. Rivers were running over the gunnels. You could look out in front of you and not be able to tell the ocean from the sky.

I wasn't thinking about how I was gonna lure my Mom home anymore. I was thinking about how I'd be lucky if I ever made it to Kramer's Beach. A foot might have been a mile in those conditions.

I was well past hoping that other boats could give me a hand. Anyone who was smart would be holed up in a harbor, drinking coffee, and watching the radar. I was on my own.



On my own and in the murk. Because, would you believe it? The sun was setting. Now, I couldn't see the sun set—I couldn't see anything—but I could tell that the clouds were getting greyer and greyer.

Which meant that I was on my own, in a storm, in the murk...

And without a paddle.