

*A Terrible Roar*  
*of* WATER

*Penny Draper*

COTEAU  
BOOKS  
FOR KIDS





## CHAPTER 1

*November 1929*

MURPHY BIT HIS LIP. HE SQUINTED HIS left eye. He could see the small shadow circling below him; he could feel it. Murphy prepared. One shoulder up, a small twist to the right. Stick out the tongue and hold it just so. Two jerks up, let the hook sink, another twist, and –

“Gotcha!”

Murphy flicked the fish onto Uncle Randall’s stage. The motion made his unruly mop of brown hair escape from his knitted cap. Murphy impatiently jammed the cap further down on his forehead as he regarded the growing pile of good-sized capelin. Murphy was pleased. Uncle Randall’s stage was the best place in the outport to fish for capelin. The stage was a wooden dock that stretched a good distance out into the harbour. At the water end was a large shed

where the whole family gathered to process the fish when the fishermen came home with loaded boats. Murphy felt ready to go out on one of those boats. He was strong and nimble, even if he did look a little scrawny. After all, he could always catch more fish than any of the other kids. Murphy had a knack. Aunt Rosie said it was in his blood.

But it was time to quit for the day. Murphy glanced over to where the other kids were jigging for fish. Sean and Fiona, his younger cousins, were doing more playing about than fishing, as usual. His buddy Martin had a good pile. Even Annie, the little kid next door, had done pretty well for a girl. She was eleven, a year younger than Murphy and very annoying, but she could fish.

“Well, if it isn’t the Capelin King. Trying to out-fish me?” came a sarcastic voice.

It was his cousin Rory. Murphy whirled around and looked way up. Rory was tall. “Of course not, Rory. You’re a real fisherman. You catch cod. Capelin’s nothing more than baitfish. I know that.”

“A r-e-a-l fisherman, wow. Kid, get this: there’s nothing impressive about being a r-e-a-l fisherman. Take my word for it. Stick to the land.”

Murphy was puzzled. “Why are you so mad, Rory? Did something bad happen out in the dory today?”

Rory looked at Murphy. “It was no worse than any other day, kid. They’re all bad.” Rory stashed his

fishing gear at the far end of the stage. “Why you even want to go out there is beyond me!”

Rory strode off towards home. Murphy stared after him. He just didn’t understand his cousin. How could anybody *not* want to be a fisherman?

Rory was his oldest cousin, ten years older than Murphy. He was already a man and had Uncle Randall’s dark looks and fierce blue eyes. Murphy was next oldest in the family. Aunt Rosie had lost a couple of babies after Rory. That’s why she’d been so eager to take Murphy in after his dad got drowned. After Murphy came Fiona. She was eight and the only one of the family who had inherited Aunt Rosie’s red hair. Fiona had the temper to match. Last came Sean, who was just seven and still a baby as far as Murphy was concerned. Aunt Rosie said that Murphy was good luck because she hadn’t lost any more babies after he came to live with them. Murphy had his doubts about the luck thing. He was born the day his dad died – how lucky was that?

Murphy dumped his capelin onto the splitting table in the shed. Taking one of the sharp knives from the wall, he quickly gutted the fish and cut off their heads. He washed them clean in salt water and loaded them into a bucket to take home. Aunt Rosie would be waiting for them.

Hollering to Fiona and Sean to get a move on, Murphy walked to the end of the stage and set his feet on dry land. Aunt Rosie’s house was just a stone’s

throw from the water's edge, as were all the houses in the outport, each close to their own family stages. After all, every family was a fishing family and a stage was where the work got done. It was handy to have everything built so close. Seventeen families lived in their outport, with more families in other villages up and down the coast of the Burin Peninsula in Newfoundland. Mostly there were no roads, but footpaths connected some outports across the rocky headlands. Others were only accessible by boat. That was all right by Murphy. He didn't need to go anywhere, unless it was out to sea.

"Thanks, Murphy," said Aunt Rosie, when he gave her the bucket of fish. "It's a good lot. Get the kids washed up for supper, will ya? And I'll need some more wood brought in." Aunt Rosie was round and warm and jolly. She liked to pretend she was fierce but she really wasn't.

Supper was fish and cabbage. Again. Fiona complained. Again. She hated cabbage. Murphy figured she better get used to it, cause he was pretty sure they'd be eating it forever. Never had there been a year like it for growing cabbage. Pickled or boiled, they had it every meal. Aunt Rosie had barrels of pickled cabbage in the cold store, and shelves of head cabbage stacked up on shelves ready to freeze when the weather got cold enough. At least there was molasses bread for afters. Murphy brought in water for the washing up and as

Aunt Rosie and Fiona tackled the dishes, he debated about taking a look at his homework. Nah. Surely there was something better to do. Uncle Randall saved the day.

“Murphy, the weather’s looking good for the morning. It’s late in the season, but we may just get one more day’s fishing in. It’s been a right fine season. Rory and I’ll take the dory. Be ready at the stage when we come back, will ya?”

“Uncle Randall, can’t I come with you? I mean, I got to learn the sea sometime, don’t I? I’m old enough and I’m real strong. Please?”

Uncle Randall exchanged a quick glance with Aunt Rosie. He looked back at his nephew. Murphy was small for his age and, like all the outport people, he was a little thin because of his diet of fish and vegetables. But Murphy was strong. Even his hair was strong; his brown curls were like springs. They constantly escaped from the knitted toque he wore every day. He had warm brown eyes; his face was brown too, from being outside all the time. It was a quiet face, but an honest one.

“No need rushing into things, lad. Tell you what – you can be my cut-throat tomorrow. You’ve a careful hand with the knife, I’ve noticed.”

Murphy sighed. It was better than nothing. *Little* kids just got to bring water and fetch salt and kick the fish guts down the hole in the stage floor. At least he wasn’t one of them any more.

“That reminds me, Murphy, you got a letter from your mom today. It’s on your bed,” said Aunt Rosie.

Murphy brightened. He liked getting letters from his mom. He only got to see her once a year when she came by schooner to visit him for his birthday. Her letters made up for the in-between times. They were always long and newsy, full of words. He guessed that made sense, since her job in the city was all about words. She was a telegraph operator in St. John’s. All kinds of messages and news came through her telegraph. Some of the news was real interesting, and she would tell Murphy about it in her letters. She told other people too. His mom told him that so many people asked her about the news that she started writing it down in a book. Folks would come to the telegraph office and read all about it. Some of the folks couldn’t read and asked her to read the news out loud to them. When his mom told him that, she asked him how his own reading was coming along. “It’s important to be able to read, if you want to get ahead,” she told him. “Make sure you keep at your lessons. Maybe you can come to St. John’s to go to school one day.”

Ha! That was never going to happen. You couldn’t fish from the city.

Murphy didn’t exactly know why a fisherman needed to know how to read. They needed to know the tides and the habits of the codfish and how to mend a net and the right amount of salt to cure the catch. But he, Murphy, was different. He needed to be

able to read his mom's letters. And he liked being the first kid in the outport to know stuff. So he paid attention to his reading lessons, even if he cared about nothing else in school.

Murphy flopped on his bed and opened his letter.

*Dear Son,*

*I have lots of news today. My telegraph has been going quite mad. It seems that rich folks down in the Boston States and other places like New York City are having money worries. Look up New York in the atlas, dear, so you'll know where I'm talking about. The people there trade in money instead of fish and all of a sudden their money isn't worth very much. Folks who used to be rich are poor, folks who used to have jobs don't, and there's a lot of upset about that. You can imagine. I'm glad you live in the outport. If the fish aren't worth much in trade, at least you can still eat them!*

Murphy rolled over on his back. He'd never been much interested in money. Like his mom said, it wasn't very important in the outport. They traded fish for whatever they needed at the store, stuff they couldn't grow like flour and sugar and tea. It worked out. Uncle Randall had some paper money hidden in the Bible. It was only paper – how could it be worth anything anyway?

Murphy smiled. His mom always had interesting stuff to tell him. He knew it was kind of strange not to live in the same house, but it was better that way. The two of them couldn't have survived in the out-port without a man to fish for them. That's why he wanted to get out on the fishing dory. When he started to earn a share of the family catch, he could bring his mom home.

*Anyway, you'll probably hear about it on the radio. The newspapers are calling it 'Black Tuesday.' No worries for you, though. Aunt Rosie tells me it's been a good year for fish and a great year for cabbage. I bet Fiona's complaining!*

*That's all for now. Be a good boy, do your chores and mind your aunt and uncle.*

*All my Love, Mother*

Murphy put the letter down and stared at the water stain on the ceiling over his bed. Boy, he missed his mom. He wanted her home for good. Why did it take so darn long to become a fisherman?