

Prequel: DANGLING BY A THREAD

The Cousins

“Got everything we need, Jesse?” The heavysset older man, his ragged gray beard looking as though he’d trimmed it himself with scissors, looked down from the dock into the re-conditioned lobster boat at the skinny kid checking their supplies.

“Everything you said,” Jesse assured him eagerly. “Tent and sleeping bags and two coolers, one with water and one with food. And extra sweatshirts and a change of clothes and a slicker, in case it rains.” He grinned. “Weather report says sunny, though.”

“And life jackets? Fishing poles and buckets? Matches and flashlights?”

The boy nodded, grinning. “And a knife and bait, and your binoculars.”

“Hope that cooler has sandwiches in it,” said a taller boy, still standing on the dock, said. “Last year we didn’t catch any fish and we practically starved.”

“We didn’t,” Jesse started, but his grandfather shushed him.

“Spending three days out on that boring island is the worst part of coming to Maine,” Simon declared. “Some vacation. No television, no phones, no bathrooms. I brought a book.” He held up a thick biography of George Washington. “At least it’s interesting. And I’ve got extra batteries for the flashlights.”

“I brought a book, too,” Jesse said, defensively. “Grampa’s book that tells all about Maine birds. It’s got pictures of cormorants and herons and black backed gulls and eider ducks, and all sorts of others.”

“Birds!” Simon wrinkled his nose as he stepped carefully into the boat. “Who cares about birds!”

“Lots of people,” said their grandfather, casting off. “Maybe you could learn something from them, Simon. They’re all different. Just like people.”

“I’ll pay attention to birds when they’re on tests in school. No one ever got smarter or richer looking at birds.”

“Maybe not,” said his Grampa. “But maybe they got happier. Leave Jesse alone and enjoy the beautiful weather and the scent of the sea. You won’t smell anything like this back in Chicago.”

“Thank goodness,” Simon muttered. He sat on the low bench in the stern and opened his book.

Their grandfather sighed. “Let’s get going, then. Jesse, you pilot. Tell me when you see buoys. I’ll let you take the wheel once we’re out of Haven Harbor. It’ll take us a while to get to King’s Island.”

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This is a prequel to *DANGLING BY A THREAD*, the fourth in Lea Wait’s *USA Today* best-selling Mainely Needlepoint mystery series. Lea also writes the Shadows Antique Print mystery series, the most recent of which is *SHADOWS ON A MORNING IN MAINE*, published last month, and historical novels for ages eight and up. She invites readers to friend her on Facebook and Goodreads, and to check her website, <http://www.leawait.com>, for more information about her and her books.