

“Dungarees,” said Abby, and pulled the dress off Rose’s head. “You’ll get all scratched up if you wear a dress for blueberry picking. Hang that up. You can wear it later.”

“You don’t know everything,” muttered Rose, but she put on her dungarees.

“Pop’s up,” Abby said a few minutes later. She was listening cautiously at the door. “We can stop whispering. I hear him downstairs.”

“Maybe he won’t let us go.”

Abby considered this. “Don’t say we’re going with Orrin. Just tell him we’re going blueberry picking.” She brightened. “If he asks, tell him we’re picking them as a surprise for Mama.”

“All right. But where’s Orrin?”

“Gone ahead. Pop won’t see him.”

Abby and Rose slipped out of their room, the only one on the second floor, and crept to the bottom of the stairs. Luther, their pop, had built the house with his own hands while he was courting Nell, their mama. Pop was the best carpenter in Lewisport, maybe in Barnegat Point, too. Abby had heard people say that many times, and she was proud of her father.

“Where are you girls off to so early?” asked Pop from his place at the kitchen table.

“Blueberry picking,” said Rose.

And Abby said, glaring at her sister, “*May* we go blueberry picking?”

Pop glanced through the window. “Isn’t even light out yet.”

“It’s almost,” said Rose. “Please?”

“Let them go,” spoke up Mama. She turned from the stove and set a plate of eggs in front of Pop.

Pop was always up early. “Early bird catches the worm,” he liked to say. “Times may be hard, but there’s no excuse for a healthy man not to be holding down a job.”

And Mama was usually up early, too, to make sure Pop got a good breakfast in him before he went off to whatever carpentry job he had found. If Mama wasn’t up early, it was because she was having one of her bad days, her mind stuck thinking of the two rosebushes and what they meant.

Abby and Rose scuttled out the door before Pop could disagree with Mama, and they caught up with Orrin, who was waiting at the edge of the woods near the spot where Blue Harbor Lane abruptly ended at a rocky beach.

“Hey,” said Abby.

“Hey,” said Orrin.

Abby had known Orrin since they were five, but she had fallen in love with him three months earlier, toward the end of second grade. She couldn’t tell him, though. Some thoughts were better left secret.