

September, 2015

Prequel to Lea Wait's THREADS OF EVIDENCE

The massive Victorian house was dark, silhouetted against the night sky. Shutters banged in the cold wind, and moonlight reflected off shattered windows

No welcoming lights invited Trick or Treaters to call. No one had lived in the old Gardener place for years. Except, whispered some in Haven Harbor, ghosts.

But the four costumed children were drawn to the mysterious house, fascinated by its past. Every Halloween they stopped here and looked nervously through the high iron gate protecting it.

"Com'on. Let's do it this year. Let's go in." Angie pushed against the rusty gate. It clanked, and then scraped against the broken concrete of the driveway, opening just wide enough so children could pass through.

"Your mom'll kill you," said Clem. "No one's supposed to go in there."

"No one will know," Angie whispered. "No one lives there."

"Ghosts do," added Cindy, reaching for her little brother's hand. He pulled it away.

"There used to be a statue of a naked lady in a fountain," Henry whispered. "Dad told me. It was right in front of the house, where everyone could see. I wish it were still there." He held his bag of candy tight and lifted his ghost-costume above his sneakers so he wouldn't trip. "If it were still there, I'd go in." He was younger than the others, and the only boy. "I would. I'd go right through those gates and up to the house and look at that statue."

"Shush, Henry," his sister said. "No way are we going in."

"We could sneak in for a few minutes." Angie hiked up the witch's costume her grandmother had stitched for her, complete with a treat bag needlepointed with a black cat.

“No one would ever know. We could just go as far as the front doors.” She took a step toward the house. “Com’on! Don’t be chickens. I’ll give you each one of my chocolate bars if you come. The best kind. The kind the Winslows handed out.”

Clem, a rotund Cinderella, hesitated, but then shivered and shook her head. “Not even for chocolate. I’m not going in there.” Clem’s bag of goodies was already heavy. She’d started knocking on doors before the sun had gone down.

“I’ll come with you, Angie,” Henry said, walking toward her.

His sister, Cindy, grabbed his shoulder. “I’m supposed to watch out for you, Henry Titicomb. You can’t go in there. It’s trespassing. We’re not allowed.” Cindy stared at the dark house looming over them. “Mom says that place is evil. A girl died there. Right where that fountain used to be, in front of the house.” She almost dropped her candy bag as she crossed herself. She’d wanted to be a nun for Halloween until her mother told her that was sacrilegious, and she should pray for more suitable choices. Tonight she was a sparkly pink princess.

“The girl’s name was Jasmine. I think she drowned,” said Henry.

“I heard she was poisoned,” said Clem.

“Maybe both,” Henry whispered.

Cindy crossed herself again.

“That was years ago.” Angie moved a few steps down the dark drive; further away from the group.

“Old Mrs. Gardener died there, too. She never left the house. People say her ghost and her daughter’s ghost and the ghosts of her seven black cats are there, in that house,” said Cindy. “Everyone knows ghosts come out on Halloween.” She glanced around, as though a ghost might appear at any minute.

“There’s no such thing as a ghost cat,” Angie declared. “Com’on. I dare you!”

“You do what you want. Henry and I aren’t going in.”

“If we’re not going in, let’s go get more candy,” said Henry. “Mom said we had to be home by eight o’clock.” He started walking up the street, alone.

“Stop!” Cindy said, holding her sequined crown and running after him. “We promised we’d stay together.”

“We did promise,” said Clem, hesitating. “Angie, come on.”

Angie took two more steps inside the gate, and looked up at the dark house. Then she turned and ran after the others.

Who – or what - was in that deserted house?

Halloween wasn’t the day to find out.

But some day she’d know, Angie promised herself. Some day she’d find out what had really happened in the Gardener house.

BIO:

THREADS OF EVIDENCE is the second book (after TWISTED THREADS) in Lea Wait’s Mainly Needlepoint series. Lea lives on the coast of Maine with her artist husband, Bob Thomas, and Shadow, her black cat. She also writes the Shadows Antique Print Mystery series and historical novels for young people. She invites readers to check her website, www.leawait.com, and to friend her on Facebook and Goodreads.

I’d be happy to do a giveaway!