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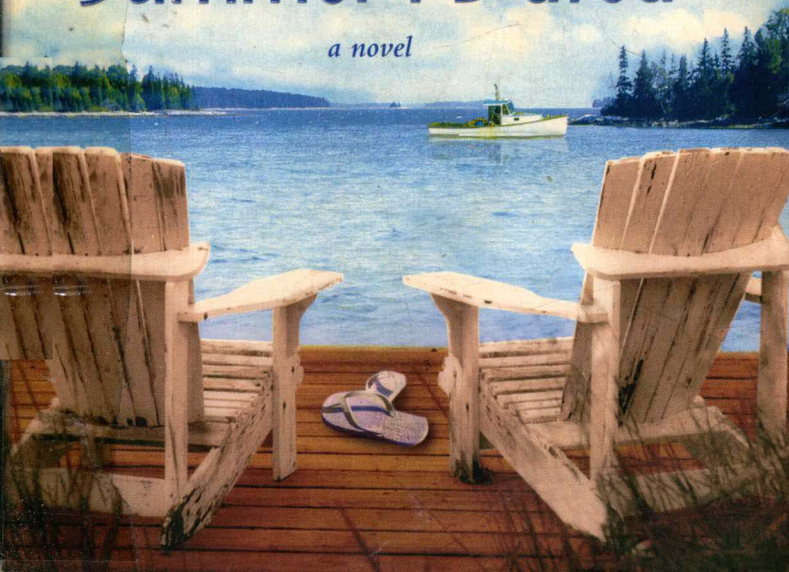
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From the author of *Looking for Peyton Place*

## The Summer I Dared

*a novel*



# BARBARA DELINSKY

## The Summer I Dared

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**NATIONAL ACCLAIM FOR THE  
BESTSELLING NOVELS OF  
BARBARA DELINSKY,  
"ONE OF WOMEN'S FICTION'S  
TRUE MASTERS"\***

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"Delinsky excels at combining a compelling mystery with an insightful portrayal of captivating people facing challenges both ordinary and dramatic."

—*Booklist*

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"Sophisticated and fast-moving. . . . It will satisfy her fans and . . . win her some new readers."

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***AN ACCIDENTAL WOMAN***

"[A] powerful domestic drama . . . from one of women's fiction's true masters."

—*BookPage\**

"Delinsky has strong characters in Blake, whose disability never impedes her work, and Hughes, who looks past his lover's disability to the woman within."

—*Baltimore Sun*

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—*People*

"A good story in an idyllic and lovingly rendered setting."

—*The Calgary Sun*

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"An achievement. . . . Delinsky's adept and compelling exploration of the inner workings of the modern upper-class American family makes for one of her best books to date."

—*Booklist*

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"Delightful. . . . Readers will be sorry to reach the end of *Lake News* and yearn for more about its cast and characters."

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## **THREE WISHES**

"Touching and delightful. . . . A story of genuine love, sacrifice, redemption, and the cohesiveness of life in a small town."

—*Chattanooga Times* (TN)

"Delinsky's prose is spare, controlled, and poignant."

—*Publishers Weekly*

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

*Looking for Peyton Place*  
*The Summer I Dared*  
*Flirting with Pete*  
*An Accidental Woman*  
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*Shades of Grace*  
*Together Alone*  
*For My Daughters*  
*Suddenly*  
*More Than Friends*  
*The Passions of Chelsea Kane*  
*A Woman Betrayed*

# Acknowledgments

The *summer* I dared? Try the entire *year* I dared. In writing this book, I dared write of two topics about which I knew absolutely nothing. Those topics were Angora rabbits and lobstering. I say “were,” past tense, because I did learn. I’m still not sure I’ve done them right, though literary license gives me some leeway. But I would have been at sea without a paddle if I hadn’t had the help of Debbie Smith, who breeds Angora rabbits at her Iron Horse Farm in Sherborn, Massachusetts, and Betty Ann and Don Lockhart, Vermonters who aided me in researching maple syrup production for *An Accidental Woman* and who turned out to know lots about lobstering as well. My thanks to Jason Marceau, of Irwin Marine in Laconia, New Hampshire, for crucial info on boats in a storm. On the matter of lobstering, others were key as well. They know who they are; I thank them for their time and generosity.

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The more I learned about lobstering, the more I came to respect the men and women who eke out a living through endless days of hard work at the mercy of the elements, and who juggle the issues of conservation and commerce as best they can. I salute you all.

Finally, I dedicate this book to Gabrielle and Jesse, with a love beyond words.

The  
Summer I Dared

## Prologue

**T**he *Amelia Celeste* was born a lobster boat. An elegant lady, she ran a proud thirty-eight feet of mahogany and oak, from the graceful upward sweep of her bow, down her foredeck to the wheelhouse, and, on a straight and simple plane, back to her stern. True to the axiom that Maine lobstermen treat their boats with the same care as their wives, the *Amelia Celeste* had been doted on by Matthew Crane in much the way he had pampered the flesh-and-blood Amelia Celeste, to whom he had been married for forty years and on whose grave every Friday he continued to lay a dozen long-stem roses, even twelve long years after her death.

Matthew had the means. His grandfather had made a fortune logging, not only the vast forests of northern Maine but the islands in its gulf that bore trees rather than granite. He had built the family home on one of those evergreen islands, aptly named Big Sawyer. Two

generations later, Crane descendants were equally represented among the fishermen and the artists who comprised the core of the island's year-round residents.

Matthew was a fisherman, and for all his family money, remained a simple man at heart. His true delight, from the age of sixteen on, had been heading out at dawn to haul lobster traps from the fertile waters of Penobscot Bay. A purist, he continued to use wooden traps even when the rest of the local fleet had switched to ones made of wire mesh. Likewise, he would have died before trading in his wood-hulled boat for a newer fiberglass one, which would have been lighter and faster. Matthew didn't need speed. He lived by the belief that life was about the "doing," not the "done." As for gaining a few miles to the gallon with a lighter boat, he felt that in a business where no two days were alike, where the seas could change in a matter of minutes and abruptly unbalance two men hauling loaded traps up over the starboard rail, the stability of the *Amelia Celeste* was worth gold. And then there was the noise. Wood was a natural insulator. Cruising in the *Amelia Celeste* was quiet as no fiberglass craft could be, and quiet meant you could hear the gulls, the cormorants, the wind, and the waves. Those things brought him calm.

Reliability, stability, and calm—good reasons why, when Matthew turned sixty-five and his arthritis worsened enough to make his hands useless in the trade, he fitted the vessel with a new engine and tanks, rebuilt the pilothouse with permanent sides to keep out the wind, polished the mahogany to an even

higher sheen, installed a defogger on the center window and seating for passengers in the stern, and relaunched the *Amelia Celeste* as a ferry.

During the first few years of this incarnation, Matthew skippered her himself. He made three daily runs to the mainland—once early each morning, once around noon, and once at the end of the day. He didn't carry cars; the ferry run by the State of Maine did that. Nor did he publish a schedule, because if an islander had a special need, Matthew would adjust his schedule to meet it. He charged a nominal fee, and was lax about collecting it. This wasn't a job; it was a hobby. He simply wanted to be on the boat he loved, in the bay he loved, and if he made life easier for the local folk, particularly when the winter months imposed a craze-inducing isolation, so much the better.

On that Tuesday evening in early June, however, when the idyll went tragically awry, Matthew—to his deep regret—was not at the helm of the *Amelia Celeste*. She was being piloted by Greg Hornsby, a far younger cousin of his who had spent all of his own forty years on the water and was as skilled a fisherman as Matthew. No, there was no shortage of experience or skill. Nor was there a shortage of electronics. As a lobster boat, the *Amelia Celeste* had been equipped with multiband radios, fish finders, and radar. As a passenger-toting vessel, she had the latest in GPS navigational systems along with the rest, but none of it would help that day.

Riding low in the water as lobster boats did, the *Amelia Celeste* left Big Sawyer at six in the evening carry-

ing the photographer, art director, models, and gear from a photo shoot done earlier on the town docks. The sun had come out for the shoot, along with a crowd of locals wanting to watch, but the water remained cold, as Atlantic waters did in June, and by late afternoon, the approach of a warm front brought in fog.

This was no problem. Fog was a frequent visitor to the region. The lobsterman who let fog keep him ashore was the lobsterman who couldn't pay his bills.

Between the instruments at hand and Greg Hornsby's familiarity with the route, the *Amelia Celeste* deftly skirted lobster buoys clustered in the shallows leading to inlets at nearby Little Sawyer, West Rock, and Hull Island. After taking on a single passenger at each pier, she settled into the channel at an easy twenty-two knots, aimed at the mainland some six miles away.

Fifteen minutes later, the *Amelia Celeste* docked at Rockland and her passengers disembarked with their gear. Eight others were waiting to board, dressed not in the black of that city crew, but in the flannel shirts and hooded sweatshirts, jeans, and work boots that any sane islander knew to wear until summer truly arrived. These eight all lived on Big Sawyer, which meant that Greg would have a nonstop trip home, and that pleased him immensely. Tuesday was ribs night at the Grill, and Greg loved ribs. On ribs night, the wife and kids were on their own. His buddies were saving a booth; he'd be joining them there as soon as he put the *Amelia Celeste* to bed.

He took two bags and a large box from Jeannie

Walsh and stowed them under a bench while she stepped over the gunwale. Her husband, Evan, handed over several more bags and their one-year-old daughter before climbing aboard himself. Jeannie and Evan were sculptors; their bags held clay, glazes, and tools, and the box a new wheel, all purchased in Portland that day.

Grady Bartz and Dar Hutter, both in their late twenties, boarded with the ease of men bred on the water. Grady worked as dockman for Foss Fish and Lobster, the island's buyer and dealer, and was returning from a day off, looking only slightly cleaner than usual. Dar clerked at the tackle and gear store; once in the boat, he reached back to haul in a crate filled with stock, set it by the wheelhouse wall, and moved down to the stern for a seat.

It was a wise move, because Todd Slokum was the next to board. Thin and pale, Todd was the antithesis of a seafaring man. Even after three years on the island, he still turned green on the ferry to and from. Local gossip had never quite gotten a handle on why he had come to Big Sawyer in the first place. The best anyone could say was that Zoe Ballard was a saint to employ him.

Now he stumbled over the gunwale, hit the deck on rubbery legs, and tripped toward the nearest bench as he darted awkward glances at the others already there.

Hutchinson Prine was only a tad more steady. A lifelong lobsterman, his aversion to talk hid a wealth of knowledge. Nearing seventy, he still fished every day, though as sternman now, with his son at the

helm. Hutch wasn't well. He had been in Portland seeing doctors. The scowl on his face said he didn't like what they had told him.

"How's it goin'?" Greg asked and got no answer. He reached for Hutch's elbow, but the older man batted his hand away and boarded the *Amelia Celeste* on his own. His son Noah followed him aboard. Though Noah was taller, and even smarter and better-looking than his father, he was just as silent. His face, at that moment, was equally stony. But he did reach to untie the lines.

The *Amelia Celeste* was seconds shy of pulling away from the dock when a pleading cry came from the shore. "Wait! Please, wait!" A slender woman ran down the dock, struggling under the bulk of heavy bags that bounced against her body. "Don't leave!" she cried beseechingly. "I'm coming! Please wait!"

She wasn't a local. Her jeans were very dark, her blouse very white, her blazer stylishly quilted. The sandals she wore wedged her higher than any islander in her right mind would be wedged, and as if that weren't odd enough for the setting, fingernails and toenails were painted pale pink. Her hair was a dozen shades of blonde, fine and straight, blowing gently as she ran. She was simply made up, strikingly attractive, and married, to judge from the ring on her left hand. The large leather pouch that hung from her shoulder was of an ilk far softer than that worked by local artisans; same with a bulging backpack.

Big Sawyer often saw women like her, but not in early June, and rarely were they alone.

"I have to get out to Big Sawyer," she begged, breathing hard, addressing Noah first, before realizing her error and turning to Greg. "I had my car reserved on the five o'clock ferry, but obviously I missed that. They said I could park back there at the end of the pier for a day or two. Can you take me to the island?"

"That depends on whether you have a place to stay," Greg said, because he knew it was what everyone on board was wondering. "We don't have resorts. Don't even have a B and B."

"Zoe Ballard's my aunt. She's expecting me."

The words were magical. Noah took her bags and tossed them into the pilothouse. She passed him the backpack, then climbed aboard on her own, but when Evan Walsh rose to give her a seat, she shook her head, and, holding the rail that Matthew had installed when he had turned the *Amelia Celeste* into a ferry, worked her way along the narrow path to the bow.

Noah released the stern line and pushed against the piling of the pier. He said something short to his father, but if there was an answer, Greg didn't catch it. As he edged up the throttle, Noah stalked past the wheelhouse. Stationing himself on the far side of the bow from Zoe Ballard's niece, he folded his arms and stared into the fog.

Quiet and graceful for a boat that was broad in the stern, the *Amelia Celeste* slipped through the harbor at headway speed. Although two hours remained yet of daylight, the thick fog had drained the world of color. Only the occasional shadow of a boat at its mooring