

As Ray Marks, a college student, sells his grandfather's Adirondack property, alarming rumors emerge that someone plans to get the farm for free. Ray and his friends work together to identify their opponents and outsmart them, in a diverse community that is not always on their side.

The Perils Of Pencil Lake

By Rolla Donaghy

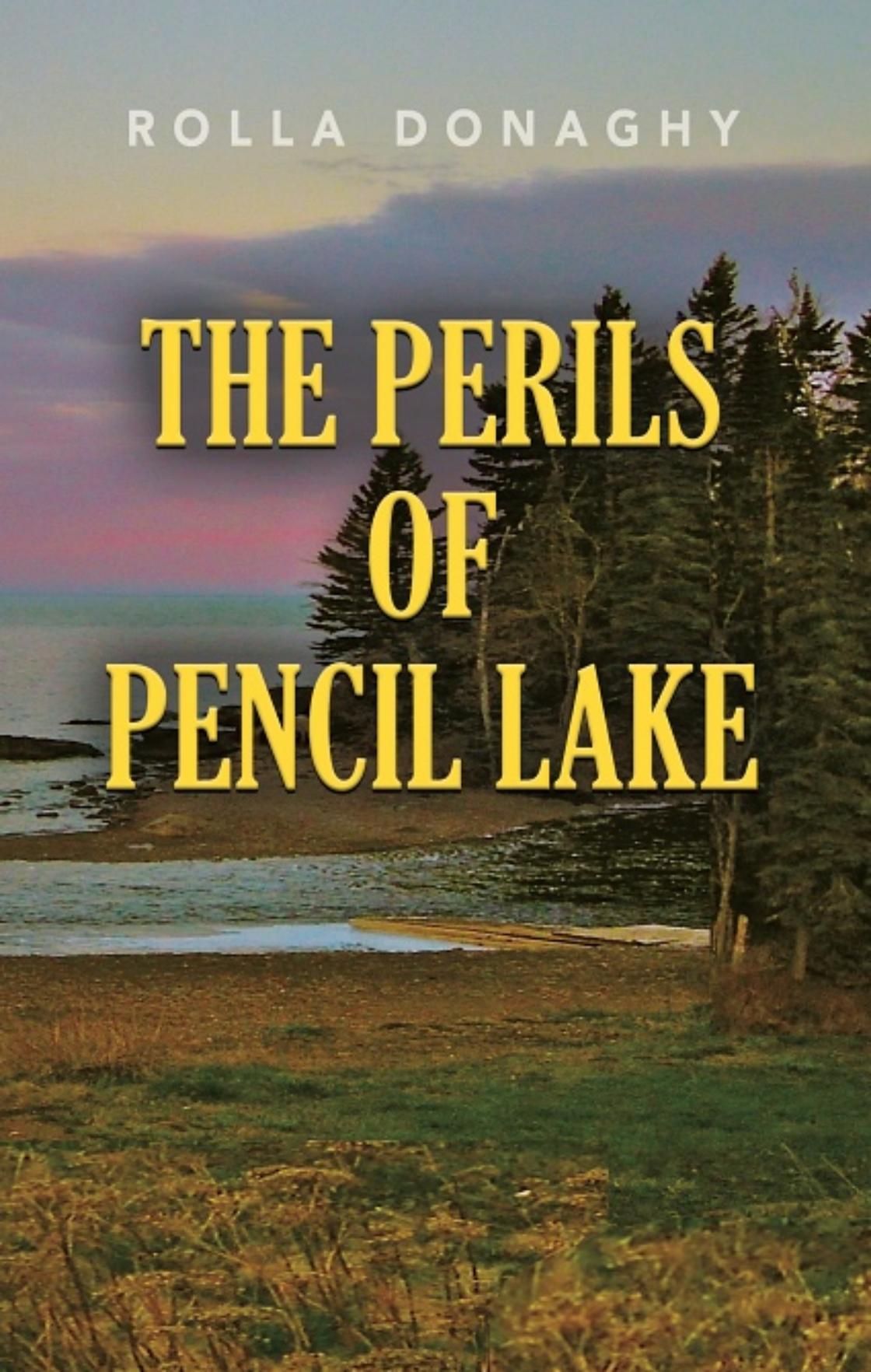
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ROLLA DONAGHY

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CHAPTER 2

Labor Day

LIKE THE LONG thin object for which it was named, Pencil Lake stretched north, 2 miles wide and 10 miles long. To 22-year-old Raymond Marks, it had changed little since he was a boy.

"I've been in the city too long," he thought. "No one wants to come to the farm since Gramps died. Time to fix it up and get it on the market."

He drove a quarter mile to the property, pleased to make good time driving from Boston. It was Labor Day and the traffic was going elsewhere, to parades, firework displays or outdoor concerts.

At the farm house, he opened an upper window and, deterred by the possibility of bats and mice upstairs, returned downstairs to start a log fire. Relieved that the electricity was on, he brought in a cooler of provisions: buns, a canned ham, jam, juice boxes and two bottles of green tea. He locked the door, overwhelmed with fatigue and moodiness, unrolled his sleeping bag on the couch near the fireplace and fell asleep for an hour.

Walking outside for firewood, Ray was intrigued by the sight of an ATV under a tarp.

"What the heck, Gramps, you forgot to put that away for the winter? My guess is, it won't start," he scolded his absent grandfather.

When it started, Ray drove it to the hill, remembering that the road below divided around the lake, the left fork disappearing into cornfields and meadows. The right fork went past a boys' summer camp, abandoned after a drought brought thick reeds

and algae blooms, making the water unsuitable for boating and unsafe for swimming. A truck parked down at the camp stimulated an urge to explore that was undeniable.

"Nope. Work first, fun later," he thought.

Texting his older sister, Violet, he wrote: 'Come help. NYC can survive without you, I can't.'

Ray loved the thirty-acre farm, its wood barn and large gardens that were Joe's recent livelihood, and he wanted to keep the place, not sell it. Scoping out the property, he saw a door in a hill near the apple orchard, a door where his grandfather forbade him to play.

"Lost the key," his grandfather would say. As a child Ray accepted that; but not now, not since he found the old rusted ring filled with keys.

"Root cellar. Maybe for storing ice or vegetables. Apple cider press? Moonshine, I hope," he joked as he jangled the chain. He tried various keys until the lock turned, but the heavy door didn't budge.

He forced a branch under the bottom and jumped on it. The door shifted enough to peer into the dark, where he saw the orange of a hunter's cap and a glint of reflection from the metal shaft of an arrow. A dead tree leaning over the hill suddenly cracked, crashed down, closing the door as Ray stepped back.

His grandfather detested hunting and complained about poachers. He was sick, miserable and moody last fall. Why did he hide an arrow and a hunting cap? Did Joe find someone trespassing and take the matter into his own hands?



About the author:

Canadian author Rolla Donaghy, studied theatre arts and music throughout her school years. Professionally, she worked as a school counselor in Toronto, Boston and Honolulu, with a specialty in reading skills. Her family for generations has appreciated the beauty of the natural environment, especially the forests of northern Ontario, Upstate New York and New England.

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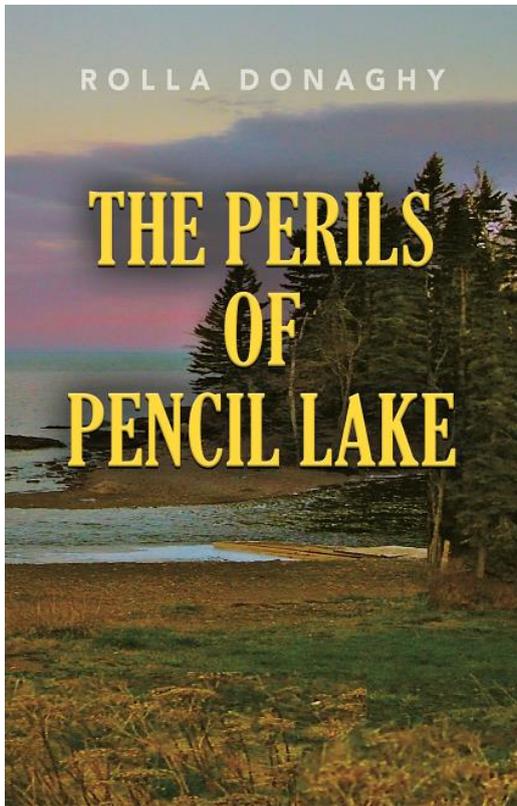
A Lobster Lesson (Non-fiction)

With Angela Amato: (Beginning Readers)

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The Picnic at Squirrel Park



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