

In An Amethyst Tree, when school peers pretend and deceive to win and a friend competes against Jennie, her brother instructs her to be truthful and calm all year, promising a gemstone if she complies. But the challenge is impossible!

An Amethyst Tree

By Rolla Donaghy

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COVER IMAGE ELEMENTS:

Amethyst Tree from Diamond Willow Amethyst Mine, Thunder Bay Canada
Handmade Stone Jewelry by EIKOSITRIA Jewelry, Greece (Onyx, red Coral chips, chalky white Howlite)

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Chapter One: **The Cabin**

For 50 strokes a teenage girl paddled a wood canoe east, then slanted the paddle in the clear water, and turned west into the sunset of the Berkshire forest. At the shadows' edge, she turned again down the skinny bay that was narrow enough to swim across if you were in the mood to swim a mile.

“Always parallel to the shore when you’re alone,” her mother, Nancy, taught them, rules of life evolved from being raised on the Maine coastline. “And swimming, too. Never straight out. Never, unless you’re going somewhere. Don’t go more than half your strength; you need to conserve enough energy to come back.”

The advice was good, but how a girl gauged half her strength was something Jennie Garner had yet to discover. With the paddle across her knees, and small waves lapping at the sides of the canoe, she sat until a

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piercing whistle from shore beckoned her to come in. She complied, reluctantly.

“Jennie Garner, darkness falls upon us fast in the woods,” her 20-year-old brother scolded, pulling the canoe rapidly onto the shore with the girl bouncing and falling over until both were laughing.

“You sound like mom,” she gasped.

“Sorry, it’s genetic,” he apologized. “Bring the life jacket; I’ll take your towel.”

The family cabin smelled the same as long as she could remember - aged cedar, wood smoke, and dust.

“When do you head back to college?” she asked her brother.

“Next week, like Weston High. My second year will be more interesting with English Lit out of the way, meaning that I can concentrate on my passion, science.”

Jennie set the rustic table with the old china plates and paper bowls.

“You’re going to be a doctor, hmm? What kind? The parents aren’t around so you can be honest with me. Are we having soup?”

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“I can tell you, since the parents aren’t around, yes, we are having soup.”

“Ha, ha. Brendan, be serious. You tell me a secret, and I’ll tell you one.”

“Oh, really, a secret at sixteen? Jennie, that is amusing.”

“You remember! Everyone in high school has private stuff.”

He poured milk into a pan with a can of mushroom soup, stirring with one hand, the other hand flipping grilled cheese sandwiches.

As they sat down, he said, “I want to switch from Pre-med to Engineering. Dad should approve, because everyone likes to build things; he will not finance an engineering education that does not lead to a lucrative career. Now, what’s your gossip?”

“To get the car, our beloved brother, Tim, says he has to go to the library each Thursday evening. Dad says if he wants the car, he has to take me.”

“Bummer. So, you two go to the library on Thursdays. Is that it?”

“Not quite. We don’t stay there. Tim drops me off at the Cambridge town library and goes to his girlfriend’s

house. Beth is a senior, too. Well, I was sitting on the steps waiting for him, and a kid from school came by with his father who owns a poster framing store. They let me complete my homework in the back room of the store until I met Tim at the library.”

“Let me get this straight; when Dad checks your homework, it’s done and Tim’s girlfriend did his?”

“I don’t exactly lie, Brendan. I say the library is fine, like it didn’t have a fire and burn to the ground.”

Brendan was annoyed. “I really don’t like the sound of this. Why did that boy’s parent allow you to go to their shop?”

“I don’t see it as a problem because Trey works there after school. When the store is closed, I walk around the block, or go to the library for real, or go to the high school and watch the football team practice.”

“Jennie, it’s wrong to play tricks like this on Mom and Dad, leading a double life,” he said.

“It’s the same with you!” she insisted. “You’re pretending to become a doctor or dentist; instead, you plan to dig up forests and make bridges.”

“Not dig forests. We excavate, do soil analysis. Why build a bridge by mistake on an oil field or quicksand?”

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We'll examine soil composition for sand, minerals, types of rare stones. Particular stones can have exceptional qualities - they can be used for medicinal purposes, for things like artificial eyes."

"Gross. Spare me the details."

She pointed to a shelf full of stones collected from the beach.

"These are beautiful; are they special? Not opals, or rubies. Aren't they granite?"

"They are quartz. All kinds of stones are beautiful, even broken coral chips found on a beach can be tumbled smooth to make jewelry. Jennie, Grampa paid my tuition for this year. Next time that you and I come here, we'll compare notes. Don't tell on me, and you can be the first to know my decision. Good grades can bring a summer job with a mine or a road company. Parents can't complain too much about honest money."

"Okay. One year, and you won't tell on me and Tim."

He sputtered, "No, you are not going to sneak around anymore; you will go to the library. And you will tell the truth, all the time."

Jennie protested. "You think I can survive in high school telling the truth? Saying that my homework is

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done; saying I practiced for track; saying I made a sports team – I have to lie. We all do.”

He was stubborn. “You will not lie, and I think your life will improve. It’s a social experiment, maybe, for one year. Promise me, no more going other places unless the library is honestly closed. Say it -- library, promise.”

Groaning, she agreed. “But you have to say, opal, promise. If you find precious stones, one goes to me. Amethyst is acceptable, since my birthday is February and I love purple.”

They raised paper cups.

“Until next summer, library, promise. Now, you say the magic words!” she insisted.

“Sure, sure. Opal, promise.”

About the Author



Author, Rolla Donaghy, studied theatre arts and music throughout her school years. With a specialty in reading, she worked in early education in Boston, Upstate New York and Honolulu schools, and writes books with vocabulary appropriate to an age group.

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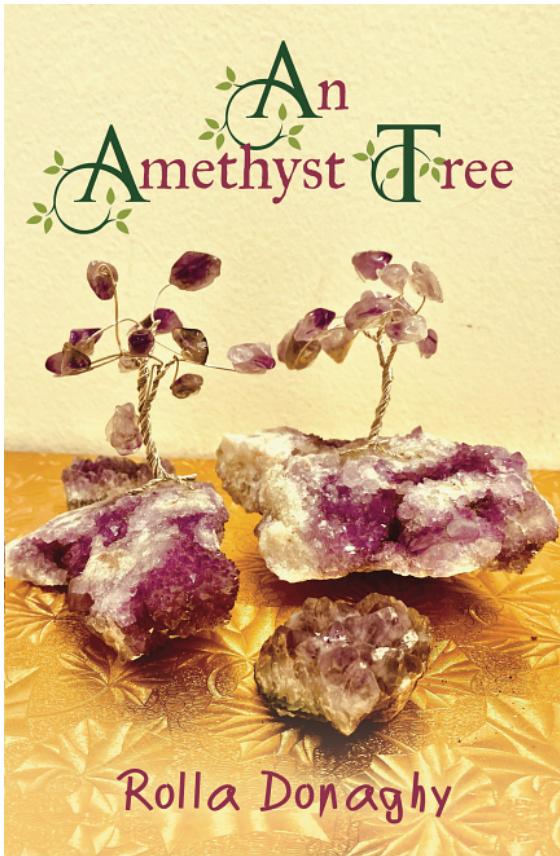
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