

June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1895  
A half hour before midnight  
Tamarack Grove  
Toronto, Ontario

“Come. We must be quiet.” I motion to the lad as I kneel next to his bed.

“Is this part of our game?” Luis looks up at me. His sleepy eyes appear to hold doubt that his auntie wants to play at this hour.

“*Oui*, but we must be quiet. Yes? Juliet, *Maman*, and Papa will not understand.” I’m clothed in a plain, black gown, and a black, netted cap confines my dark hair. The full moon shines through the nursery window. Luis searches my face for a moment and seems satisfied with what he sees in the reflection of my eyes.

He quickly rises and does my bidding. The large estate of his home offers unlimited fodder for outdoor games of all types. All his favorite games involve adventure. We’ve been reading *Treasure Island* together, and I often encourage his playfulness. I hope he goes along with my charade, a secret, promised excursion.

“Where are we going?” Luis asks as he pulls on his trousers, with excitement in his voice. He tears off his nightshirt and yanks on the shirt and sweater I offer him. His pupils widen in the dim light as he questions me.

“Don’t forget your shoes.” I hold up a pair of stylish, black leather boots to the boy before me. Luis snatches the boots, steps into them, and trusses up his feet with their laces.

“Now what?” he demands.

I grab the carpetbag at my feet, which contains some of his clothes I’d packed earlier in the day and hidden under his bed. I pluck his still warm stuffed elephant out of his cozy nest of sleep and add it to the stash. Luis should be past the age for stuffed toys, but he still loves Elephant. I encase Luis’s warm hand in my cool, clammy one and proclaim,

“Now our adventure begins.”

I lead him with whispers and light steps out of his room through the hall, down the stairs and out the library window, which I’ve left open. He follows me. I’ll keep up the pretense until we are safely stowed away on the train tomorrow morning, which will take us to Lake Huron’s shore. There, a steamer awaits to take us to our inheritance across two Great Lakes.

When far enough away, I will tell Luis. I hope his ten-year-old heart can forgive me.