

which had wearied her bitter season, but she had gained courage to look forward to the summer. Alberta society never allowed any occasion for festivity to slip by unnoticed. Indeed the English colony was renowned for its gay hospitality. As soon as the day was fixed for the departure of the *Stronghold* the citizens bestirred themselves to give a ball to the admiral, and the officers, in return, gave a farewell ball in the dockyard.

"In a few weeks you will be welcoming the *Spitfire*," said Neville, with a touch of sentimental jealousy which Letitia was quick to note.

Letitia had a new dress for these balls, and a new ball-dress was by no means an everyday event in Alberta. She was far too pretty and popular for Neville to have a chance of appropriating her on these occasions, and he also had his own social duties to attend to. The Roys were not the only people from whom he had received hospitality. Nevertheless, in one way or another, Neville and Letitia were much together during that last month. Mrs. Roy relaxed her discipline and permitted the young people, with Edgar and James as an escort, to enjoy extended rides through the woods. She was also persuaded to consent to a moonlight excursion on the water, up the inlet. On this last occasion Letitia's five brothers were considered to constitute a sufficiently strong body-guard, and Mrs. Roy, who had no great liking for small boats, stayed at home.

The sun was setting as they pushed out from the low pier, but the rich sunset lights lingered long afterward above the dark, fir-clad hills of the island. Very gradually they faded and merged themselves in the blue sky overhead, which then grew darker and darker, until the stars appeared, and the full moon rose majestically over the town. By that time the Roys had almost reached the Narrows, where the tide rushed with tremendous force between projecting rocks. The younger boys wanted to row through, and urged that the current was with them. But Letitia protested. Edgar was captain of the crew, and Neville set the lesson of obedience. As a compromise the boys were allowed to land and scramble over the rocks. Edgar undertook to stay with the boat, so Letitia and Neville presently, at Edgar's suggestion, also climbed up the rocks, and strolled through the woods to a point that was celebrated for the beauty of the view it commanded.

How could a pair of lovers fail to be moved by the influences of the hour? The pine-woods were dark, and the trail was narrow and tangled with briars. It was impossible to walk side by side, and therefore it was difficult to talk. Often the lapping of the water on the shore, and the crunching of cones under their feet, were the only sounds that disturbed the stillness of the evening. In the distance the boys' voices could now and then be heard, and occasionally there was the splash of Edgar's oar on the water as he drifted patiently backward and forward. Letitia led the way, for she knew which trail to follow; but Neville was only half a pace behind her, near enough to pull aside the boughs or to hold down the straggling brambles that impeded her course. Sometimes a ray of moonlight pierced the heavy, somber pine-branches overhead, and fell for a moment on her fair neck; sometimes it touched the soft rings of hair that clustered round her ears; and sometimes, when she half turned toward him, Neville was able to look for a moment into her hazel eyes. They were scarcely conscious how trivial were the remarks they made to each other. For the instant the senses were dominant.

Suddenly the path led them out of the woods on to the high bluff which Letitia had been trying to gain. Below them, and stretching as far as they could see to the right and the left, the deep waters of the inlet glimmered and gleamed in the moonlight. On the opposite shore an arbutus-tree distinctly projected itself from the pine-wood, and threw a weird shadow on the rocks. Letitia lifted her face to Neville to call his attention to it, and the next moment Neville's arm was round her waist and his lips were pressed to hers. The moonlight, which beautified everything on which it fell, beautified Letitia's features, and Neville yielded to an irresistible impulse. Letitia's equally irresistible impulse was to draw back, in shyness or in fright, and she followed the impulse even while her first surprise gave way to rapturous happiness. 'There was no longer any doubt that Neville felt even as she did. She half turned as she reached the edge of the woods to listen to the words that must come now without delay. Alas! the boys' voices were coming nearer and nearer. As for Neville, he was filled with dismay. What excuse could he offer for his mad conduct?

"Forgive me," he murmured as he rapidly followed her.

Letitia gave him her hand in reply, and he raised it to his lips.

The boys' voices sounded harsh and shrill in the silence of the evening. Neville scarcely knew whether he was glad or sorry that they were so near. He managed to recover himself before the boys themselves appeared; and to withdraw their attention from Letitia he plied them with question after question, to all of which they had eager answers to give, besides much extra information to impart. In spite of the narrow path, Neville managed, in the darkness, to retain Letitia's hand until they reached the boat.