

BEVERLY OF GRAUSTARK

By George Barr McCutcheon.

Author of "Graustark"

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Beverly squeezed the Countess's arm. "Hush!" she whispered in great relief. Dagmar looked at her in astonishment. She could not fathom the whimsical American.

"They have been keeping an incessant watch over the house of Frederic's cousin. He is to marry her when the time is propitious," volunteered the young duke. "She is the most beautiful girl in Asphania, and the family is one of the wealthiest. Her parents bitterly oppose the match. They were to have been secretly married some months ago, and there is a rumor to the effect that they did succeed in evading the vigilance of her people."

"You mean that they may be married?" asked Yvette, casting a quick glance at Beverly.

"It is not improbable, your highness. He is known to be a daring young fellow, and he has never failed in a siege against the heart of woman. Report has it that he is the most invincible Luthario that ever donned love's armor." Beverly was conscious of furtive glances in her direction, and a faint pink stole into her temples. "Our fugitive princes are lucky in neither love nor war," went on the duke. "Poor Danton, who is hiding from Gabriel, is betrothed to the daughter of the present prime minister of Dawsberg, the beautiful Iolanda. I have seen her. She is glorious, your highness."

"I, too, have seen her," said Yvette, more gravely than she thought. "The report of her betrothal is true, then?"

"His sudden overthrow prevented the nuptials which were to have taken place in a month had not Gabriel returned. Her father, the Duke of Matz, wisely accepted the inevitable and became prime minister to Gabriel. Iolanda, it is said, remains true to him and sends messages to him as he wanders through the mountains."

Beverly's mind instantly reverted to the confessions of Baldos. He had admitted the sending and receiving of messages through Franz. Try as she would, she could not drive the thought from her mind that he was Danton, and now came the distressing fact that his secret messages were words of love from Iolanda. The audience lasted until late in the night, but she was so occupied with her own thoughts that she knew of but little that transpired.

Of one thing she was sure. She could not go to sleep that night.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE next morning Aunt Fanny had a hard time of it. Her mistress was petulant; there was no sunshine in the bright August day as it appeared to her. Toward dawn, after she had counted many millions of black sheep jumping backward over a fence, she had fallen asleep. Aunt Fanny obeyed her usual instructions on this luckless morning. It was Beverly's rule to be called every morning at 7 o'clock. But how was her attendant to know that the graceful young creature, who had kicked the counterpane to the foot of the bed and had nudged the pillow out of all shape, had slept for less than thirty minutes? How was she to know that the flushed face and frown were born in the course of a night of distressing perplexities? She knew only that the sleeping beauty who lay before her was the fairest creature in all the universe. For some minutes Aunt Fanny stood off and admired the rich youthful glow of the sleeper, prophetically reluctant to disturb her happiness. Then she obeyed the impulse of duty and spoke the summoning words.

"What time is it?" demanded the newcomer from the land of Nod, stretching her fine young body with a splendid but discontented yawn.

"Seven, Miss Beverly. What time do you suppose it is? His d'ar reg'lar time, o' co'se. Did you all have a nice sleep, honey?" and Aunt Fanny went blissfully about the business of the hour.

"I didn't sleep a wink, confound it," grumbled Beverly, rubbing her eyes and turning on her back to glare up at the tapestry above the couch.

"You wasn't wakin' any when Ah rust come into de room, lemme tell you," chuckled Aunt Fanny, with caustic freedom.

"See here, now, Aunt Fanny, I'm not going to stand any lecture from you this morning. When a fellow hasn't slept a—"

"Who's a lecturin' anybody, Ah'd ink to know? Ah'm jes' tellin' you what you was a-doin' when Ah come into de room. You was a-sleepin' p'etty dog gone tight, lemme tell you. Is you got out for you walk befo' breakfast, honey? 'Cause if you is, you all 'll be obliged to climb out'n dat bad maghty quick-like. You bar is ready, Miss Beverly."

Beverly splashed the water with unreasonable ferocity for a few minutes, trying to enjoy a diversion that had not failed her until this morning.

"Aunt Fanny," she announced after looking darkly through her window into the mountains above, "if you can't brush my hair—ouch!—any easier than this I'll have some one else do it, that's all. You're a regular old bear."

"Po' lil' honey," was all the complacent bear said in reply, without altering her methods in the least.

"Well," said Beverly threateningly, with a shake of her head, "be careful that's all. Have you heard the news?"

"What news, Miss Beverly?"

"We're going back to Washin'ton."

"Thank de Lawd! When?"

"I don't know. I've just this instant made up my mind. I think we'll start—let's see, this is the 6th of August, isn't it? Well, look and see if you don't know, stupid! The 10th! My goodness! Where has the time gone, anyway? Well, we'll start some time between the 11th and the 12th."

"Of de moat, Miss Beverly?"

"No. September. I want you to

Long after the departure of Lorry and Anguish the princess sat on the balcony with Beverly and the Countess Dagmar. They did not talk much. The mission of these venturesome young American husbands was full of danger. Something in the air had told their wives that the first blows of war were to be struck before they looked again upon the men they loved.

"I think we have been betrayed by some one," said Dagmar after an almost interminable silence. Her companion did not reply. "The couriers say that Gabriel knows where we are weakest at the front and that he knows our every movement. Yet, there is a spy here after all."

"And that spy has access to the very heart of our deliberations," added Beverly pointedly. "I say this in behalf of the man whom you evidently suspect, Countess. He could not know these things."

"I do not say that he does know, Miss Calhoun, but it is not beyond reason that he may be the go-between, the means of transferring information from the main traitor to the messengers who await outside our walls."

"Oh, I don't believe it!" cried Beverly hotly.

"I wonder if these things would have happened if Baldos had never come to Edelweiss," mused the princess. As though by common impulse, both of the Graustark women placed their arms about Beverly.

"It's because we have so much at stake, Beverly, dear," whispered Dagmar. "Forgive me if I have hurt you."

Of course Beverly sobbed a little in the effort to convince them that she did not care whom they accused if he proved to be the right man in the end. They left her alone on the balcony. For an hour after midnight she sat there and dreamed. Every one was ready to turn against Baldos. Even she had been harsh toward him, for had she not seen him relegated to the most obnoxious of duties after promising him a far different life? And now what was he thinking of? His descent from favor had followed upon the disclosure which made plain to each the identity of the other. No doubt he was attributing his degradation in a sense to the fact that she no longer relished his services, having seen a romantic little ideal shattered by his firm assertions. Of course she knew that General Marlanx was alone instrumental in assigning him to the unpleasant duty he now observed, but how was Baldos to know that she was not the real power behind the Iron Count?

A light drizzle began to fall, cold and disagreeable. There were no stars, no moon. The ground below was black with shadows, but shimmering in spots touched by the feeble park lamps. She retreated through her window, determined to go to bed. Her rebellious brain, however, refused to banish him from her thoughts. She wondered if he were patrolling the castle grounds in the rain in all that lonely darkness. Seized by a sudden inspiration she threw a gossamer about her, grasped an umbrella and ventured out upon the balcony once more. Guiltily she searched the night through the fine, drizzling rain. Her ears listened eagerly for the tread which was so well known to her.

At last he strode beneath a lamp not far away. He looked up, but of course could not see her against the dark wall. For a long time he stood motionless beneath the light. She could not help seeing that he was dejected, tired, unhappy. His shoulders drooped, and there was a general air of listlessness about the figure which had once been so full of courage and of hope. The post light fell directly upon his face. It was sadder, despondent, strained. He wore the air of a prisoner. Her heart went out to him like a flash. The debonair knight of the black patch was no more, in his place there stood a sullen slave to discipline.

"Baldos!" she called softly, her voice penetrating the dripping air with the clearness of a bell. He must have been longing for the sound of it, for he started and looked eagerly in her direction. His tall form straightened as he passed his hand over his brow. It was but a voice from his dream, he thought. "Aren't you afraid you'll get wet?" asked the same low, sweet voice, with the suggestion of a laugh behind it. With long strides he crossed the pavement and stood almost directly beneath her. "Your highness!" he exclaimed gently, joyously. "What are you doing out there?"

"Wondering, Baldos. Wondering what you were thinking of as you stood under the lamp over there."

"I was thinking of your highness," he called up softly.

"No, no!" she protested.

"I, too, was wondering—wondering what you were dreaming of as you slept, for you should be asleep at this hour, your highness, instead of standing out there in the rain."

"Baldos!" she called down tremulously, "you don't like this work, do you?"

"It has nothing but darkness in it for me. I never see the light of your eyes. I never feel the—"

"But! You must not talk like that. It's not proper, and besides some one may be listening. The night has a thousand ears—or is it eyes? But listen. Tomorrow you shall be restored to your old duties. You surely cannot believe that I had anything to do with the order which compels you to work at this unwholesome hour."

"I was afraid you were punishing me for my boldness. My heart has been sore—you never can know how sore. I was disgraced, dismissed, forgotten."

"No, no, you were not! You must not say that. Go away now, Baldos. You will ride with me tomorrow," she cried nervously. "Please go to some place where you won't get dripping wet."

"You forget that I am on guard," he said, with a laugh. "But you are a wise counselor. Is the rain so pleasant to you?"

"I have an umbrella," she protested.

"What are you doing?" she cried in alarm. He was coming hand over hand up the trellis work that inclosed the lower veranda.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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A. M.	A. M.	P. M.	P. M.	P. M.			A. M.	P. M.	P. M.	A. M.	P. M.
		7:15	11:10	3:20	Lv. DALLAS	Ar. "TEATS"	9:30	1:45	5:15		
		7:34	No Stop	3:39	Ar. "GILLIAMS"	Ar. No Stop	9:02	No Stop	4:47		
		7:38	No Stop	3:43	Ar. "BRIDGEPORT"	Ar. No Stop	8:57	No Stop	4:42	Ar. Ar.	Ar.
		7:43	No Stop	3:48	Ar. FALLS CITY	Lv. 8:45	1:00	4:30	8:30	11:45	4:35
6:00	9:00	1:30	7:55	11:50	Ar. "BLACK ROCK"	Lv. 8:45			7:45	11:00	4:35
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