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**Beverly** of Graustark GEORGE BARR

"Oh," moaned Beverly, suddenly | very nice gentlemen, I trust. Less than leaning against the fore wheel, her eyes almost starting from her head. The leader laughed quietly-yes, good naturedly. "Oh, you won't-you won't kill us?" She had time to observe that there were smiles on the faces of all the men within the circle of light,

"Rest assured, your highness," said the leader, leaning upon his rifle barrel with careless grace, "we intend no harm to you. Every man you meet in Graustark is not a brigand, I trust, for your sake. We are simple hunters, and not what we may seem. It is fortunate that you have fallen into honest hands. There is some one in the coach?" he asked, quickly alert. A prolonged groan proved to Beverly that Aunt Fanny had screwed up sufficient

courage to look out of the window. "My old servant," she half whis-pered. Then, as several of the men started toward the door: "But she is old and wouldn't harm a fly. Please. please don't hurt her."

"Compose yourself; she is safe," said the leader. By this time it was quite dark. At a word from him two or three men lighted lanterns. The picture was more weird than ever in the fitful glow. "May I ask, your high ness, how do you intend to reach Edelweiss in your present condition? You cannot manage those horses and, be sides, you do not know the way."

"Aren't you going to rob us?" de manded Beverly, hope springing to the surface with a joyful bound. The stranger laughed heartily and shook his head.

"Do we not look like honest men?" be cried, with a wave of his hand to ward his companions. Beverly looked dubious. "We live the good, clean life of the wilderness. Outdoor life is necessary for our health. We could not live in the city," he went on, with grim humor. For the first time Beverly no ticed that he wore a linge black patch over his left eye, held in place by a cord. He appeared more formidable than ever under the light of critical inspection.

"I am very much relieved," said Beverly, who was not at all relieved, "But why have you stopped us in this man-

"Stopped you?" cried the man with the patch. "I implore you to unsay that, your highness. Your coach was quite at a standstill before we knew of its presence. You do us a grave in-

"It's very strange," muttered Beverly, somewhat taken aback.

Have you observed that it is quite dark?" asked the leader, putting away

his brief show of indignation. "Dear me; so it is!" cried she, now able to think more clearly. "And you are inlies from an inn o

house of any kind," he went on. "Do you expect to stay here all night?" "I'm-I'm not afraid," bravely shiv-

most dangeror

"I have a revolver," the weak little voice went on.

"Oho! What is it for?" "To use in case of emergency."

"Such as repelling brigands who suddenly appear upon the scene?"

"May I ask why you did not use it this evening?" "Because it is tocked up in one of my

bags I don't know just which oneand Aunt Fanny has the key," confess-

The chief of the "bonest men" laughed again, a clear, ringing laugh that bespoke supreme confidence in his right to enjoy himself.

"And who is Aunt Fanny?" he asked. covering his patch carefully with his

slouching hat. "My servant. She's colored."

"Colored?" he asked in amazement. "What do you mean?"

"Why, she's a negress. Don't you know what a colored person is? "You mean she is a sinve-a black

sinve?

"We don't own staves any mo'more." He looked more puzzled than ever-then at last, to satisfy himself, walked over and peered into the coach. Aunt Fanny set up a dismal howl. An Instant later Sir Honesty was pushed aside, and Miss Cathoun was anxiously trying to comfort her old friend through the window. The man looked on in allent wonder for a minute and then strode off to where a group of his men stood talking.

"Is yo' daid yit, Miss Bev'ly-is de end came?" mouned Aunt Fanny. Beverly could not repress a smile.

"I am quite nilve, nuntie. These men will not hurt us. They are very nice gentlemen." She uttered the last observation in a loud voice, and it had its effect, for the leader came to her side with long strifes

"Convince your servant that we mean no harm, your highness," he said eagerby, a new deference in his voice and manner. "We have only the best of motives in mind. True, the hills are manner. "We have only the best of motives in index. True, the hills are full of lawless fellows and we are obliged to fight them almost daily but."

In a harvern, They conversed "You poor follow," cried Beveriy in low mass and in a harvern pityingly. He have and absently brightened perceptibly, while the faces of his men turned in their direction.

an hour ago we put a band of robbers to flight"-"I heard the shooting," cried Bever-

"It was that which put my escort to flight." "They could not have been soldiers of Graustark, then, your highness,"

quite gallantly. "They were Cossacks, or whatever you call them. But, pray, why do you call me 'your highness?' demanded The tall leader swept the Beverly. ground with his hat once more.

"All the outside world knows the Princess Yetive-why not the humble mountain man? You will pardon me. but every man in the hills knows that you are to pass through on the way from St. Petersburg to Ganlook. are not so far from the world, after all, we rough people of the hills. We know that your highness left St. Petersburg by rail last Sunday and took to the highway day before yesterday because the floods had washed away the bridges north of Axphain. Even the hills have eyes and ears."

Beverly listened with increasing per plexity. It was true that she had left St. Petersburg on Sunday: that the unprecedented floods had stopped all railway traffic in the bills, compelling her to travel for many miles by stage, and that the whole country was confusing her in some strange way with the Princess Yetive. The news had evidently sped through Axphain and the hills with the swiftness of fire. It would be useless to deny the story; these men would not believe her. In a flash she decided that it would be best to pose for the time being as the ruler of Graustark. It remained only for her to impress upon Aunt Fanny the importance of this resolution.

"What wise old hills they must be," she said, with evasive enthusiasm. "You cannot expect me to admit, how ever, that I am the princess," she went

"It would not be just to your excel lent reputation for tact if you did so, your highness," caimly spoke the man. "It is quite as easy to say that you are not the princess as to say that you are, so what matters, after all? We reserve the right, however, to do hom-age to the queen who rules over these wise old hills. I offer you the humble services of myself and my companions. We are yours to command.'

"I am very grateful to find that you are not brigands, believe me," said Beverly. "Pray tell me who you are, then, and you shall be sufficiently rewarded for your good intentions."

"I? Oh, your highness, I am Baldos, the goat hunter, a poor subject for reward at your hands. I may as well admit that I am a poacher and have no legal right to the prosperity of your hills. The only reward I can ask is forgiveness for trespassing upon the property of others.

"You shall receive nardon for at transgressions, but you must get me to ome place of safety," said Beverly ea-

"Ami quickly, too, you might well have added," he said lightly, "The horses have rested, I think, so with yarr permission we may proceed. I know of a place where you may spend he night comfortably and be refreshed. for the rough journey tomorrow.

"Tomorrow? How can I go on? on alone!" she oriest despairingly

"Persolt me to repoind you that you re no laurer alone. You have a ragged following your highness, but it full be a loyal one. Will you re-enter he conclet It is not far to the place I pe it of, and I myself will drive you there. Come, it is gotting late, and rome retinue, at least, is humary,"

He flung open the coach door, and his but swept the ground once more. The light of a lantern played fitfully upon his dark, gaunt face, with its pathent smile and commons patch. She besituted, fear entering her sont once more He looked up quickly and saw the indecision in her eyes, the unite appeal.

"Trust me, your highness," he said gravely, and she allowed him to hand her litto the couch.

A moment later he was upon the driver's box, rous in hand. Unling our to his companhous in a language strange to Becceriy, he eracked the whip, and once more they were him bering over the wretched road. Reverly sank back into the sent with a deep sigh of resignation. Well, I'm in for it," she thought.

"It doesn't matter whether they are thieves or angels, I recken I'll have to take what comes. He doesn't look very me just now as if he thought I were

CHAPTER V.

WO of the men walked close beside the door, one of them hear. In the house of my fathers, obliged to fight them almost daily, but After nucleic she found herself analyz. She heard the men beand ment turn the she found the she found the she that the she heard the she heard the she is the same.

She was saying to herself that here were her first real specimens of Graustark peasantry, and they were to mark an ineffaceable spot in her memory. They were dark, strong faced men. of medium beight, with fierce black eyes and long black hair. As no two were dressed allke, it was impossible to recognize characteristic styles of attire. Some were in the rude, baggy costumes of the peasant as she had imagined him; others were dressed in the tight fitting but dilapidated uniforms of the soldiery, while several were in clothes partly European and partly oriental. There were hats and fezzes and cans, some with feathers in the bands, others without. The man nearest the coach wore the dirty gray uniform of an army officer, full of holes and rents, while another strode along in a pair of baggy yellow tronsers and a dusty London dinner jacket. All in all, it was the motllest band of vagabonds she had ever seen. There were at least ten or a dozen in the party. While a few carried swords, all lugged the long rifles and crooked daggers of the Tartars.

"Aunt Fanny," Beverly whispered. suddenly moving to the side of the subdued servant, "where is my revolver?" It had come to her like a flash that a subsequent emergency should not find her unprepared. Aunt Fanny's jaw dropped, and her eyes were like white rings in a black screen.

"Good Lawd, wha - what fo', Miss Bev'ly'

"Sh! Don't call me Miss Bev'ly Now, just you pay 'tention to me, and I'll tell you something queer. Get my revolver right away and don't let those men see what you are doing." While Aunt Fanny's trembling fingers went in search of the firearm, Beverly outlined the situation briefly, but explicitly. The old woman was not slow to understand. Her wits sharpened by fear, she grasped Beverly's instruc-

tions with astonishing avidity. "Ve'y well, yo' highness," she said. with fine reverence, "Ah'll p'ocuah de bottle o' pepp'mint fo' yo' if yo' jes' don' mine me pullin' an' haulin' 'mongst dese boxes. Mebbe yo' all 'druther hab de gingeh?" With this wonderful subterfuge as a shield she dug slyly into one of the bags and pulled forth a revolver. Under ordinary circumstances she would have been mortally afraid to touch it, but not so in this emergency. Beverly shoved the weapon into the pocket of her gray traveling tacket.

"I feel much better now, Aunt Fanny," she said, and Aunt Fanny gave a vast chuckle.

"Yaas, ma'am, indeed-yo' highness," she agreed suavely

The coach rolled along for half an bour and then stopped with a sudden jolt. An instant later the tall driver appeared at the window, his head uncovered. A man hard by held a lan-

"Qua vandos ar deltanet, yos serent," said the leader, showing his white teeth in a triumphant smile. His exposed eye seemed to be glowing with pleasure and excitement.

"What?" murmured Beverly hopeless-A puzzled expression came into his face; then his smile deepened and his eye took on a knowing gleam. "Ah, I see," he said gayly, "your

highness prefers not to speak the language of Graustark. Is it necessary for me to repeat in English?" "I really wish you would," said Beverly, catching her breath. "Just to see

how it sounds, you know." beg to inform you that we have reached the Inn of the Hawk and Ra- the party who could speak and out Tomorrow we, too, abandon the place, erly sat and watched his virile, and so our fortunes may run to rether for the face and student his graceful mov the to offer you in the way of nourish- how an lettormit, homeless wanter ment, and there is none of the com- in the hills could be so poetly and a forts of a pulace. Yet princesses can cultured as this fellow seemed to be. no more by choosers than beggars. Three or four men, who were mains

Hawk and Rayea,"

and perplexity. "I see no inn," she murmured appre-

bensively. "Look aloft, your highness. That great black canopy is the roof; we are standing upon the floor, and the dark are the walls of the Hawk and Raven | only branches, This is the largest tavern in all Grau-

the world itself.

ally the girl cried in dismay. by the hand and led her away from of us until it pictures you."

The couch, a ragged lantern bearer. She looked him fairly in the eye for a her pocket. It was a capacious pocket, not without some show of surprise defiantly into a finid powder rag that said. lay on the bottom. The latt, lenther "The knave is glorified," was his

"Have you no home at all-no house in which to sleep?" Beverly asked, "I live in a castle of air," said be.

which they walked carefully. Her feet fell upon a soft, grassy sward, and the clatter of stones was now no longer They were among the shadheard. owy trees, gaunt trunks of enormous size looming up in the light of the lan-Unconsciously her thoughts terns. went over to the forest of Arden and the woodland home of Rosalind, as she had imagined it to be. Soon there came to her ears the swish of waters, as of some turbulent river hurrying by. Instinctively she drew back, and her eyes were set with alarm upon the black wall of night ahead. Yetive had spoken more than once of this wilder-Many an unlucky traveler had been lost forever in its fastnesses.

"It is the river, your highness. There low in the valley, and there are marshes yonder when the river is in its natural bed. The floods have covered the low grounds, and there is a torrent coming down from the hills. Here we are, your highness. This is the Inn of the Hawk and Raven." He bowed and pointed with his hat

to the smoldering fire a short distance ahead. They had turned a bend in the overhanging cliff and were very close to the retreat before she saw the glow. The fire was in the open air and di-

rectly in front of a deep cleft in the rocky background. Judging by the sound the river could not be more than 200 feet away. Men came up with innterns and others piled brush upon the fire. In a very short time the glen was weirdly illuminated by the dancing flames. From her seat on the huge log Beverly was thus enabled to survey a portion of her surroundings. The overhanging ledge of rock formed a wide, deep canopy, underneath which was perfect shelter. The floor seemed to be rich, grassless loam, and here and there were pallets of long grass, evidently the couches of these homeless men All about were huge trees, and in the direction of the river the grass grew higher and then gave place to reeds. The foliage above was so dense that the moon and stars were invisible There was a deathly stillness in the air. The very loneliness was so appalling that Beverly's poor little heart was in a quiver of dread. Aunt Fanny, who sat near by, had not spoken since leaving the coach, but her eyes were expressively active.

The tall leader stood near the fire conversing with haif a dozen of his followers. Miss Calhoun's eyes finally rested upon this central figure in the strange picture. He was attired in a dark gray uniform that reminded her oddly of the dragoon choruses in the comic operas at home. The garments, while torn and soiled, were well fitting His shoulders were broad and square, his hips narrow, his legs long and straight. There was an air of impudent grace about him that went well with his life and profession

Surely here was a careless free lance upon whom life weighed lightly, while death "stood afar off" and despaired. The light of the fire brought his gleam ing face into bold relief, for his hat was off. Black and thick was his hair, rumpled and apparently uncared for The face was lean, smooth and strong with a devil-may-care curve at the coners of the mouth. Beverly found her self lamenting the fact that such an in teresting face should be marred by a ugly black patch, covering she knenot what manner of defect. As for U rest of them, they were a grim conpany. Some were young and beard as others were old and grizzly, but "Your every wish shall be gratified, were active, alert and strong. 'L. leader appeared to be the only one i ven. This is where we dwelt last night | stand the English hanguage. As they some hours at least. There is but lits ments she found beself women't

when the fare's in one pot. Come, takaniy of a lower order than the your highness, let me conduct you to companions, set about preparing a supthe guest chamber of the Inn of the feet Others unlike tell the tired horse and led them of toward the river. Two Beverly took his hand and stepped to dushing young fellows carried the sent the ground, looking about in wonder enshous under the rocky canopy and constructed an elaborate couch for the princess," The chief, with his own launds, soon began the construction of a small chamber in this particular corher of the cave near the opening. The walls of the chamber were formed of shadows just acyond the circle of light carriage robes and blankets, clonks and

"The guest chamber, your highness," stark. Its dimensions are as wide as he said, approaching her with a smile at the conclusion of his work.

"You mean that there is no inn at . It has been most interesting to watch you." the sald, rising.

"Alas, I must confess it. And yet And it has been a delight to intethere is shelter here. Come with me. 1st you," he responded, "You will find Let your servant follow." He took her 'te-lusion there, and you need see none

proceeding. Beverly's little right hand moment and then impulsively extends was rightly customer the revolver in her hand. He chasped it warmly, but and the mustle of the wearon bored "I am trusting you implicitly," she

purse from which it escape had its simple rejoinder. He conducted her silver lips opened as if in a broad grin to the improvised bedchamber, Aunt of derision, revelue in the plight of Fanny following with loyal but unthe changes. The P's hand was ut certain trend "I regret, your highonce firm and gentle, his stride bold. noss, that the conveniences are so few, much like an angel, but he looked at yet easy. His rakish hat, with its ag- We have no landlady except Mother gressive red feather, towered a full Earth, no waiters, no porters, no maids. one. Dear me, I wish I were tack in head above Beverly's Parisian violets. In the Inn of the Hawk and Raven. This being a men's hotel, the baths are on the river front. I am having water brought to your apartments, however, waving his hand gracefully. "I sleep but it is with deepest shame and sor-

She laughed so heartly that his face ceries and Shelf Goods. though by concert.

"It is a typical mountain resort, toes on the market.

then," she said. "I think I can manage very well if you will fetch my bags to my room, sir,"

"By the way, will you have dinner served in your room?" very good hu-

moredly. "If you don't mind, I'd like to eat in the public dining room," said she. A few minutes later Beverly was sitting upon one of her small trunks, and Aunt Fanny was laboriously brushing her dark hair.

"It's very jolly being a princess," murmured Miss Calhoun. She had bathed her face in one of the leather buckets from the coach, and the dust of the road had been brushed away by the vigorous lady in waiting.

"Yaas, ma'am, Miss-yo' highness, is no danger. I will not lead you into hit's monstrous fine fo' yo', but whar it," he said, a trifle roughly. "We are is Ah goin' to sleep? Out yondah wir is Ah goin' to sleep? Out yondah wif all dose scalawags?" said Aunt Fanny rebelliously.

"You shall have a bed in here, Aunt Fanny," said Beverly.

"Dey's de queeres' lot o' tramps Ah eveh did see, an' Ah wouldn' trust 'em as fer as Ah could beave a brick

"But the leader is such a very courte ous gentleman." remonstrated Beverly, "Yaas, ma'am; he mussa came f'm Gawgia or Kaintuck," was Aunt Fanny's sincere compliment,

The pseudo princess dined with the vagabonds that night. She sat on the log beside the tall leader and ate heartily of the broth and broiled goat meat, the grapes and the nuts, and drank of the spring water, which took the place of wine and coffee and cordial. It was a strange supper amid strange environments, but she enjoyed it as she had never before enjoyed a meal. The air was full of romance and danger, and her imagination was enthralled. Everything was so new and unreal that she scarcely could be lieve herseif awake. The world seem ed to have gone back to the days of Robin Hood and his merry men. "You fare well at the Inn of the

Hawk and three ' she said to him, her voice treatment with excitement He looked mournfully at her for a moment and then smiled naively. "It is the first wholesome meal

have had in two days," he replied, "You don't mean it!" "Yes. We were lucky with the guns today. Fate was kind to us-and to you, for we are better prepared to entertain royalty today than at any time since I have been in the hills of Grau-

"Then you have not always lived in Graustark? "Alas, no, your highness. I have lived elsewhere."

stark."

"But you were born in the principality?" "I am a subject of its princess in heart from this day forth, but not by birth or condition. I am a native of

us as Circumstance! and be smiled rather recklessly. "You are a poet, a delicious poet," cried Beverly, forgetting herself in her

the vast domain known to a few of

enthusiasm "Perhaps that is why I am hungry and unshorn. It had not occurred to me in that light. When you are ready to retire, your highness," he said, abruptly rising, "we shall be pleased to consider the Inn of the Hawk and Raven closed for the night. Having feasted well, we should sleep well. We have a hard day before us. With your consent, I shall place my couch of grass near your door. I am the porter. You have but to call if any-

thing is desired." She was tired, but she would have sat up all night rather than miss any of the strange romance that had been thrust upon her. But Sir Redfeather's suggestion savored of a command, and she reluctantly made her way to the flapping blanket that marked the entrance to the bedchamber. He drew the curtain aside, swung his hat low and muttered a soft good night.

"May your highness' dreams be pleasant ones!" he said.

"Thank you." said she, and the curtain dropped impertmently. "That was very cool of him, I must say," she added as she looked at the wavering door.

When she went to sleep she never knew. She was certain that her eyes were rebellious for a long time and that she wondered how her gray dress would look after she had siept in it all night. She heard low singing as if in the distance, but after awhile the stillness became so intense that its pressure almost suffocated her. The rush of the river grew louder and louder, and there was a swishing sound that died in her ears almost as she wondered what it meant. Her last waking thoughts were of the "black patch" poet. Was he lying near the door? (To be continued.)

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