

356 BEVERLY OF GRAUSTARK

There was no assurance that I could regain the throne — not until the very last. Without it I should have been the beggar instead of the prince. We would have lived in a hovel, after all. Fortune was with me. I deceived you for months, Beverly — my Beverly, but it was for the best. In defense of my honor and dignity, however, I must tell you that the princess has known for many days that I am Dantan. I told her the truth when Christobal came that day with the news. It was all well enough for me to pass myself off as a vagabond, but it would have been unpardonable to foist him upon her as the prince."

"And she has known for a week?" cried Beverly in deep chagrin.

"And the whole court has known."

"I alone was blind?"

"As blind as the proverb. Thank God, I won your love as a vagabond. I can treasure it as the richest of my princely possessions. You have not said that you will go to my castle with me, dear."

She leaned forward unsteadily and he took her in his eager arms. Their lips met and their eyes closed in the ecstasy of bliss. After a long time she lifted her lids and her eyes of gray looked solemnly into his dark ones.

"I have much to ask you about, many explanations to demand, sir," she said threateningly.

"By the rose that shields my heart, you shall have the truth," he laughed back at her. "I am still your servant. My enlistment is endless. I shall always serve your highness."