

**THE GOLDEN ROSE:
THE ROMANCE OF
A STRANGE SOUL**

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The golden rose: the romance of a strange soul by Amélie Rives

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AMÉLIE RIVES

**THE GOLDEN ROSE:
THE ROMANCE OF
A STRANGE SOUL**

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GOLDEN ROSE

THE ROMANCE OF
A STRANGE SOUL

BY
AMÉLIE RIVES
(PRINCESS TROUBETZKOY)

*"What the wind is to a bonfire
and a match, absence is to love;
it kindles a great passion and
extinguishes a small one."*



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TO
LOUISA McLAIN PLEASANTS
IN TOKEN OF A BEAUTIFUL FRIENDSHIP
OF MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS

*"Love cometh and love goeth,
And he is wise who knoweth
Whither and whence love flies.
But wise and yet more wise
Are they that heed not whence he flies or whither,
Who hither speeds to-day, to-morrow thither;
Like to the wind that as it listeth blows,
And man doth hear the sound thereof, but knows
Nor whence it comes nor whither yet it goes."*

—WILLIAM WATSON.



"Ce qui torture l'âme plus que la brièveté des heures heureuses, c'est la trahison, le mensonge, la lâcheté. Il y a pis encore : s'apercevoir tout à coup qu'on a aimé un fantôme."—DORA MELEGARI.

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I

“FREED from passion, fear, and anger,” said Meraud ; then again, lingering on each word, “‘Freed from passion, fear, and anger.’ That is to be free indeed. Oh, I am free, Anice, I am free!”

“You look as radiant as one’s idea of Freedom herself,” said Anice, smiling.

“I think I *am* Freedom herself. No, Freedom has always been herself, and I was once a slave. I am more than Freedom.”

“You are certainly radiant,” smiled Anice.

“I am the king’s daughter, all glorious within. It shines through.”

“Yes,” assented Anice, still smiling, “I think it does.”

“You haven’t remarked my modesty, per-

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haps. That, too, is a radiant virtue," observed Meraud, and laughed out on the last words with the sudden glee of a child.

"Now you look as you did the first day I ever saw you," said Anice—"just seventeen; no more, no less."

Meraud, with a half-lifted tangle of roses in her hand, gazed softly back at her.

"Eighteen years ago! It's appalling, isn't it?"

"Eighteen years of perfect friendship. It's amazing, perhaps. I shouldn't call it appalling, exactly," answered Anice, with that ready smile of hers that never bored one.

"Oh!" cried Meraud, reaching out impulsive arms across the rose-heaped silver tray between them, and kissing her friend's charming, ugly face—"oh, it *is* appalling, in a way! What if you were taken from me? What if that came? What if that came?"

Anice began to tease gently, returning the kisses between her words.

"Freed from passion, *fear* (I think you said?), and—"

"No, no! Not altogether from fear—fear

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for those I love. From fear for myself, yes—but you, Anice, you—”

“I—I—” said Anice, paling with sudden passion. “It isn’t you that should feel that fear. It’s I. It’s I.”

“You mean my heart?” said Meraud, after a pause. But Anice could not speak just then. From behind the shelter of her two hands she nodded assent.

“Dear,” said Meraud, after another pause, “you know I may live to be an old woman—though I do hope not!” she broke in upon herself. “No one wants to be old. I don’t want to be old, and I don’t want you to be old. I want us to go together. But I may live ages—*ages*. Do you hear, Anice? And I am careful for your sake. You know I am. And in the end—why, the end has got to come some day, and what could be better than just to go out—whiff!—like a candle flame?”

“It—it—doesn’t appeal to me, somehow,” murmured Anice, mirthful through tears. “Sometimes, dearest, your genius for comforting fails you. But I was selfish. I’m sorry. Only—” And again she could not speak. Meraud put an arm thrilling with