



# Drawn from Life

## Short Stories of Human Interest Romantic, Tragic, Fanciful

### How They Met Themselves

By Virginia Berkley Bowie

**M**ESSIRE GUI DE ROHAN went quickly up the flower-scattered hillside toward the forest. He had thrust a rose in his dark curls, and the blood of twenty bounded in his veins; for whose blood would not glow warmer that hastened to tryst with Yolande La Bel?

Ever and anon fragments of song burst from his amorous lips; but for the most part he stayed silent, his eyes already set on a vision of the fair girl waiting for his coming, within the forest. At such times he would quicken his steps, as if he were fain to keep pace with his impatient heart.

Entering the wood, his eyes darted hither and thither, now on this side, now on that, that he might soonest win a glimpse of the damsel; but it was some little space before he spied the glint of her robe, at the end of a dim forest aisle. Instantly the heart leaped within him, and his breath came in quick gasps.

"Yolande!" he cried, with the voice of one mate that calls the other; and then, "My beautiful!"

He was beside her in little time, his ardent eyes drinking in the perfection of her pallid beauty. A tall girl was Yolande, and slender; lithe as a young willow, and with a wondrous scarlet mouth. The amber gold of her hair fell loose upon her shoulders from under her hood, and her two eyes shone like mysterious stars, though whether black or violet beneath her lashes no man might say. But in her mouth dwelt all the marvel of her rich blood and throbbing love; so that a

man might look upon her and hold himself happy to die upon her kiss.

For a little while Gui held her from him, a hand on either shoulder and his eyes bent on the upturned loveliness of her face. Then, in an instant, his arms had her fast, and he knew only that his love was the fairest damsel in God's world.

Thereafter, they loved much within the forest, and sought only to depart when the night came. Twice they strove to tear themselves away, only to return for fresh kisses and lovers' babble, and now, for the third time, their farewells were spoken.

Said Gui: "Yolande, my beautiful, how can I go from her I love so well? My sweet lady, bid me not leave thee!"

And she: "Nay, certes, the dark comes, and we must e'en go our separate ways. But bide a little. Two come toward us along the forest path."

Now, even as she spake, they heard a sound as if two approached gently along the overgrown way. The night was close upon them, so that they might not clearly see at a distance; but enough light yet remained to behold plainly the face of one another, and they drew aside, thinking to let the strangers pass.

Through the branches above them the first stars looked down, set in a bed of sky still touched with afterglow; and, presently, their gaze grew dimly to discern two shapes that came toward them in the gathering dusk. Man and woman they were, and lovers, for they walked with arms entwined and eyes set upon the face of one another; though not as some might walk, intent upon the body's loveliness. Rather they communed soul to soul, even as those might walk who are no longer flesh.

Very silent they were, uttering no word; nor were their faces clearly visible until, abreast of the other twain, they turned on a sudden and, still with arms entwined, stood face to face with them.

Then a very terrible thing was seen. Countenance for countenance, body for body, Gui and Yolande gazed upon themselves, even as if they looked on their own reflections, or had, on a sudden, met their twin semblances, born at the same birth, of the same mother!

For a little space they stared, immovable, incapable of word or cry, a great horror gnawing their hearts; and then, with a low moan, Yolande sank swooning into her lover's arms. He, with eyes wild and voice grown terrible, cried: "What shapes are ye that seek to cross our path? Are ye of heaven or hell?" For still the other twain gazed on him, calm, intent, immovable, the shadow of a smile on their parted lips.

"We are the Other-Selves," they answered, with voices as faint and far away as the voices of a dream. "Born at a man's birth, we walk beside him along the path of destiny, through all his life. Ours are the shadows that follow his childhood, that sit beside him at marriage-feast and council-board; ours the shapes that are with him in his hours of tempest, and that desert not his gray hairs, going down with him, at length, into the grave itself. Nor are we often visible, save only to the eyes of souls. Yet, perchance, one wandering in that dim moment 'twixt dusk and dark may, on a sudden, meet us face to face and gaze, a little time, on the man he might have been."

For a moment Gui strove to speak, but his dry throat held him silent, his wild eyes burning amid the waste of his white face.

Then once more the Other-Selves took up their tale. "Look on us, Gui de Rohan, and see the love that might once have been thine. For, behold, love is gone from thee!"

Gui said, "Nay, ye speak not sooth, for what man could love a damsel more greatly than I love Yolande, my sweet lady?"

And they: "Nay, damoiseau, thou knowest not love; the fire of youth hath ravished it from thee. Bethink thee! When thou and the maid Yolande were but newly met, thou wert happy only in sitting at her feet, and knelt to her as at a shrine, seeing in her the mother of thy fair sons. Yea, often ye spake together of the time when thou shouldst have her to wife, and when joy

shouldst crown thy youth, and honor thine age, with Yolande, thy sweet lady and comrade, set beside thy hearth. At her feet thou wert to lay the spoils of battle and all the people's praise, thy sole guerdon the love in her wise, sweet glance and the laughter of thy fair children clustered about her knees."

"Aye, I mind me," Gui spake, his voice dry and strange; and still the tale went on.

"Thereafter, the rose-red flame of youth sprang up within thee, and the vision passed. With it departed the love that endureth for all time, though thou knewest it not, having only joy of thy damsel's beauty and the ripe redness of her mouth. Thy world grew to hold naught but the richness of her amber hair and the glory of two eyes looking out from a fair face; and, drunken with youth and spring, thou hast now no thought save of the moment that passes thee. The way of death, O damoiseau, the way of death!"

"How may that be sooth?" Gui asked, thrilled by their faint, sweet voices.

"'Tis sooth, indeed," the twain answered him; "for lo, the flame is lit within thee that will blaze high a while, but afterward must sink to darkness, leaving naught but the ashes of a dead desire. Thou, who hast thought to be constant for all time, must presently turn away from the lady Yolande, having no longer any joy of her, to seek another Yolande, and afterward another and another, and so on through all thy life. For after brief pleasure must come the restless pain of thy soul, unsatisfied, ever seeking that which it missed in love's beginning—not the pulse of hot blood, but the peace of mated hearts."

Then Gui spake with heavy spirit, "I ask but this: Has that peace gone from me, never to be more regained?"

They answered: "Not so. But an' thou wouldst learn the way of love that may not be defiled, look well upon us, even as though we were the mirror of thy better soul."

Now, even as they spake thus, Gui saw a radiance grow about them, the faint and ghostly glimmer of another sphere, transfiguring face and body so that there was naught earthly in them, and they seemed true spirit. Turning, they gazed into the eyes of one another, and on the face that was the mirrored semblance of his own Gui read strong manhood, the purity of purpose, and a heart's firm constancy. And in the

gaze of her who was as Yolande shone forth all love, all tenderness, all motherhood—sweetheart, yet mate. No word was said between them; yet within Gui's brain it was even as if that Other-Self had spoken, "My beautiful one, fair body, fair spirit, love is born of both, yet he who would know that which cannot change must first and deepest love the fair soul within thee."

For a space they stood there, mated hearts knitted together indissolubly, evil fortune or good, the clear fulfilment of a man's best dream. And then, still with arms entwined, they turned slowly away down the forest aisle, the lambent light about them ever fainter and fainter until lost in distance, leaving Gui alone with his fear.

Presently the maid Yolande wakened again to life, her eyes still wild with the horror which her last conscious glance had held. "Gui," she cried, "Gui, the phantasms! 'Tis the sign of death!"

"Nay, love," he answered, "nay; say rather the sign of life!"

And with arms entwined, even as that other twain had walked, they passed through the forest ways and down the hillside to where the castle beacons starred the night.

## Pie

By Walter Hackett

**T**HERE is little doubt but that for the appetizing and enticing aroma of an apple-pie Jim Graves, the sheriff of Warhoe County, would still be a bachelor. Not that a life of single blessedness was his ambition. Indeed, the contrary was true, for the pies of the Widow Cummins (The sheriff was a hardened and unrepentant victim of the pie habit. His first action upon arising in the morning was to plunge upon a piece of that succulent morsel, and his last upon retiring was to dispose of as large a quantity as circumstances would permit. He was a slave to the tempting delicacy as some men are slaves to liquor.) had for a long time made him desire her for a helpmate.

Unfortunately, however, he was possessed of a painful shyness. The only thing that emboldened him ever to enter the widow's presence was the thought of her pies, and once these were destroyed, or his capacity to destroy them was destroyed, he found

himself utterly unable to screw his courage up to the point of proposing. Not that this would have required any great degree of bravery. The whole county could have told him—the whole county, of course, was thoroughly versed in the condition of Jim's heart, though he, with the customary fatuity of lovers, imagined it a very great secret—that the widow would help him all she could. Indeed, the local humorists had it that if the sheriff would only open his mouth the widow would do the rest. But he never opened his mouth in the widow's presence—except for the reception of pie.

Then it happened that one day, in pursuit of a bandit, the sheriff rode by the widow's home. Only a few moments before he had struck the man's trail and now rode after him in hot pursuit. But just as he passed the gate of his adored one's neat little place a sudden breeze struck his cheeks and his nostrils told him that the widow was baking a pie—an apple-pie and so far as he could judge a masterpiece of its kind.

Instantly his whole being craved it poignantly. Never before, it seemed, had he desired a piece of pie so fervently as he did at that instant. He smacked his lips as he thought of it. But his duty bade him leave behind the tempting dish and continue his pursuit. The thought of this steeled him and he drove his spurs into his horse's flank. The beast sprang forward carrying the sheriff into further strata of air more thickly imbued with the spiced aroma than that which had first tempted him.

This proved more than he could bear. Silencing his conscience by arguing that the man was on foot and therefore could not possibly escape him—the desert lay in the direction he had taken—no matter how long he delayed, he reined in his horse and dismounted. Then fastening the steed to the fence he made his way toward the house.

Behind its spotless curtains his hesitation and yielding to temptation had been followed with breathless interest. For the first time since she had known him the widow saw him halt before her home with dismay. The reason was a simple enough one. She was concealing the bandit the sheriff was pursuing.

Her soft heart had taken pity on him when, a few moments before, he had knocked at her kitchen door and asked for a glass of water and then, before she could