

When I Met Sally

by Eric Thiolle

When I met Sally

I was all

Unsuspecting

Of what powers

Might be found

In this world and

In a woman.

I was like a boy. Or

A monk in his small chamber

With a narrow window

Opening on the large

Field of experience.

Nothing had prepared me for

The gush of warm and earthy energies

That she poured on me.

It was like

Walking across a field at night, and

Being thrown bodily skyward

By a geyser I did not know was there.

The stars seem now so close.

* * *

The best-laid plans

Of mice and men

Often go astray.

I know this, of course I do... But

That was no preparation,

Or consolation when my terrarium tipped

Topsy-turvy and the furniture

Spilled out, willy-nilly

Without a care for my sense

Of alarm or injustice.

Why...

Why start a hopeful project when
You know at the start
That it will end,
Its ugliness
A bad joke, a cruel thumbing
Of the devil's nose
At our unfortunate conflation
Of beauty and permanence?

Of course,
You know the answer to that question...

And I am learning it.

* * *

When I met Sally, she
Threw her arms around
My neck (as promised)
And pressed sweet, soft lips
Against my own. I was so
Surprised
At how natural it felt
To put my hands on her hips
And draw her
Into the circle of my arms
As if we were two
Adjacent puzzle pieces,
Long separated,
Who had found each other.

* * *

A shipwrecked captain
Thrown upon the beach
After a long night's losing struggle

With an implacable ocean
And crying bitter tears of shame
For his failings and faults
Might feel it an unwarranted miracle
To feel the sun shine upon
His weary body and whiskered face
Warming him from skin to bone.

* * *

When I met Sally
We talked at first
Of ping-pong and Tintin
Red wine and ocean spray
Photographs and children...
And then
Her energy burst forth,
Irrepressible, sensual,
Shining on my quarter deck
Raining on my mainsail
Gently and insistently
Calling me forth
To steer, together
Into deeper waters.

One hundred and fifty
Miles between us, yet
She could set my skin
Tingling! Electricity
Building in my
Fingertips, her breath seemingly
Warm on the nape of my neck. Here
And not here, the most
Fantastic longing.

* * *

Fears run in me
Like a cold

Underground river
Rolling large smooth rocks
With a gnashing sound
Like ice cubes rattling
In a highball glass
Hinting
At the strength of
That swift and
Dangerous current

Each stone felt there
Is a single
Chilling idea. One,
A dark and
Speckled granite
Has a dead
Earthward pull...
Turned over, it reveals
An etching of my fear
That you will tire of me
And my doubts

* * *

When I met Sally
She came out of the darkness
Like a beautiful figment of my
Fantastical imagination...
A nymph! She
Approached me
Tentatively but surely
And she kissed me
And the night
And the press of her against me
And the condensing of vaporous dream
Into physical solidity
Under my hands

Was so dreamlike and yet
So achingly real
That my senses drowned
In honeyed sweetness
And I breathed
Underwater.

* * *

This giving of grace
This generous pouring of energy
This profligacy of sweetness
Is so unbounded
That I could believe
That you are an embodiment of
Earthly energies, Shiva or Isis or
A spirit of the woods
Sent to me by gods
I don't believe in.
But why me?
What have I done
To earn this gift?

Beyond that unanswerable why
I can sometimes see that
You

 Are only half the story
And I
 The other half.

We together form a circle
Along which our energies race
And chase each other
Higher and higher.

* * *

Sweet girl, you are
My shining sun
My waterfall of boundless energy

An ocean moving tirelessly against my shore

You are
Yin to my yang
Soft to my hard
Yielding to my thrusting

You are
The bird singing in the night
The kitten stretching luxuriantly
The tigress fiercely defending

You are to me
The quintessential essence
Of all the most beautiful powers
That I call Woman

Bold and humble
Wise and fierce
Giving and accepting
Wild and thoughtful

As beautiful as the moon in the night sky
As sensuous as the nymph naked under that moon

When I met Sally
The end became the beginning
And I became
Unaccountably lucky.

