Mack and Sally

by John Repp

Apart most of each day, silent and solitary during all but the summer weekends they toured the classic-car festivals endemic to our region, fond of solo vacations whose surprises and pains they narrated to no one, Mack and Sally each nevertheless could sense at will and with uncanny accuracy the other's state of being, whether Mack's deep, circumscribed pleasure in a sidewalk well-edged or his chronic annoyance at the chaos of Regina Martin's side yard, or the thunk Sally heard every time she slotted a perfectly lathed piece of syntax in a court brief most other attorneys would scrap out to a paralegal.

Especially on the rare occasions when one had angered the other, this preternatural empathy baffled not just the sceptical among us, but also the typically indifferent or oblivious, not least because the gestures Sally and Mack made to restore their maddening comity could hardly have been more banal: Flowers or a piece of jewellery from him, a clownish bowtie or a pizza coupon from her. Unless we were too momentarily harried or cynical to do anything but disdain or doubt it, all of us, whether friends of long standing, work acquaintances, or town gadflies and gossips wondered at the invisible wire, the magic lasso, the luminescent gravitational field that bound Mack and Sally together. But like most times, ours can't abide—not for long, anyway—the smallest kindness, let alone an unbreakable bond of love. Even if only in the comfortably furnished parlor of your most civilized mind, when was the last time you did anything but mock every syllable of sentiment, especially your own?

Yet I've never doubted, perhaps because I don't see the point of working so hard to verify for the millionth time that everything in Denmark is rotten. I know very well whatever ties them together can never be explained, but whenever I think about Mack and Sally, I find myself in a speculating, Platonic frame of mind. Of what ideal Substance

or Composition can their bond be forged or woven or conjured? A belt fashioned of platinum discs strung on tungsten thread? Soft-spun granite dusted with quartz? Copper wire warm with the hum of other-half-found Perfection?

What will happen when one of them dies? Though not given to morbid reveries, I can't help but visualize a miles-long queue of suitors once the jahrzeit elapses, desire and hope made material despite the known, the experienced, the mocked, and the doubted.