

The Ballad of Old Sally

Marxist Jargon

main progression is 8 bars:

| F | C | Dm | Am | Bb | F | C | C7 |

pre-chorus is same, 2x speed:

| F C | Dm Am | Bb F | C C7 |

“That’s what the neighborhood...”:

| F Bb Dm C | F | x2

| F C Dm Am | C |

| F Bb Dm C | F |

Sally was a farmer’s daughter.

She grew up to be a farmer.

As one did in those days, she worked hard to fill the larder
each year.

She lived down the road from here.

She might have been queer;

she never married anyway.

She lived alone in a little farmhouse

with cats and chickens and a dozen cows.

She did the work of ten men by herself
with little help.

She planted potatoes in the spring,

and while she hoed the rows, she’d sing,

“La-dee-dah-dee-dah-dee-dah-dee-dah.”

Then one day she was in the barn muckin’,

she stood up on a stack of buckets

to bat at a pigeon who was sitting in the rafters

shitting in the water that was meant for the cattle.

She shooed that bird away with a broom

but the buckets came out from under her soon

after. She fell to the barn floor.

And she landed awkwardly upon her leg

and there she lay.

She heard a crack

and even though she knew her neighbors had her back,

there’d be nobody coming round today,

so Sally got up from where she laid

and hobbled home in pain on her bum leg.

Sally sat down with a glass of water,

said a quick prayer to the Holy Father.

Tried not to be bothered

by the throbbing but it was getting hotter.

She got her

only shot glass out.

Poured one in and shot it down.

Just then the pastor from the town

unexpectedly came round.

“Sally, what’s wrong? You’re white in the face.”
She grimaced and groaned, said, “I’m okay.”
She was sweating and starting to sway
but she would not cry out in pain.
The pastor got the doctor and the doctor said,
“Sally, you got to lie down in bed.
Do not try to work, rest up instead.”

The village they got organized
to milk Sally’s cows each day twice.
They would not charge her a dime
‘cause that’s what neighbors did in those times.
And you might think that’s quite a deal,
to get to let broken legs heal.
But imagine how that must feel
for Sally.
With no insurance policy,
no paid time off, it’s got to be,
honestly, a little scary not to be
able to work.
What’s even harder is to believe
that one is worthy to receive
that gift of labor to relieve
your suffering, in a time of need.

But that’s what the neighborhood is for.
What’s yours is mine, what’s mine is really yours.
That’s what the neighborhood is for.
What’s yours is mine, what’s mine is fucking yours.

For six weeks, Sally walked on crutches.
Her leg stayed sore, it hurt to the touch, and
she tried to embrace being bored
while she watched the neighbors do her chores
through the window, a little forlorn.
She’d holler without an ounce of scorn,
“You don’t need to feed the chickens. Bob already did this morn.”

She knew they wouldn’t let her pay them for it.
If anything, they’d say, “Pay it forward.”
That’s how it worked, full stop.
Don’t even try to argue with Bob.
He’d say, “You’d do the same for me.” And he’d be right:
Sally cared for Bob’s children when his wife died.

That cold night is still remembered here like it was yesterday.
Particulars they fade away,
but the feeling it remains,
of neighborly solidarity,
generalized generosity.
That Sally got more than charity
or sympathy is not lost on me.