

Sally from *Valhalla* by Paul Rudnick

**SALLY:** Some people think that I had—feelings for James Avery, but that is just not true. But before he—went away, he always used to say something which I will never forget. He would say that he'd been studying the situation since kindergarten, and that he'd made lists and charts and held a personal pageant, and that he had finally determined that I was the prettiest girl in all of Dainsville. And he said that the prettiest girl can give people hope, and brighten their day, and wasn't that just a wonderful thing to say? Especially for a delinquent? And ever since then, whenever I look in the mirror, I see Eleanor Roosevelt. Only, of course, pretty. I mean, Mrs. Roosevelt works so hard, trying to help the poor and the downtrodden, but can you imagine how much more she could do, if she were pretty? And of course, there's also inner beauty, but inner beauty is tricky, because you can't prove it. I've thought a lot about this, you know, about beauty and goodness, and all the different religions? I mean, Buddha is chubby—face it. And Confucius was all old and scraggly and, I imagine, single. And you're not even allowed to have a picture of Mohammed—was it the teeth? I don't know. But Jesus is always really pretty, with perfect skin and shiny hair, it's like God was saying, look to Jesus, for tips. And I don't want to be vain or prideful, so I always remember what James said, in one of his letters. He said that there are only two things which really matter in life: youth and beauty.