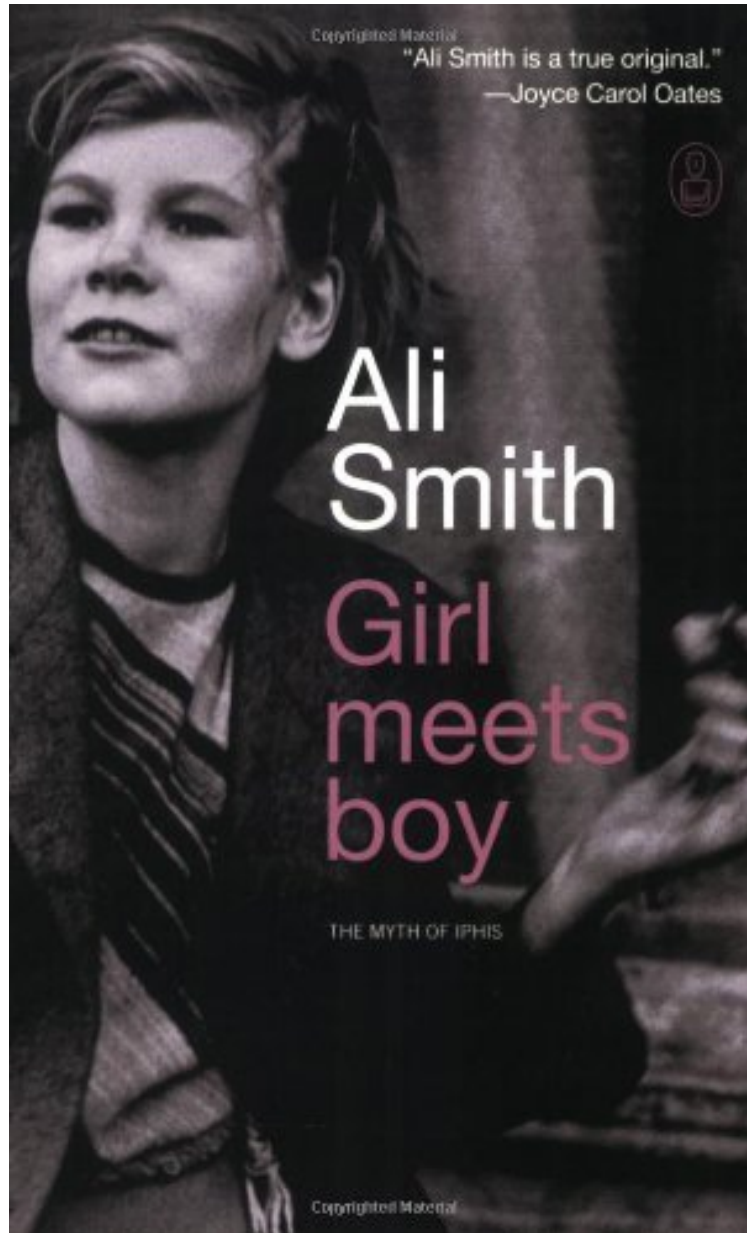


(Library ebook) Girl Meets Boy: The Myth of Iphis (The Myths)

## Girl Meets Boy: The Myth of Iphis (The Myths)

Ali Smith

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**Ali Smith : Girl Meets Boy: The Myth of Iphis (The Myths)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Girl Meets Boy: The Myth of Iphis (The Myths):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. "How, preciously, do we bottle imagination?"By G.

Messersmith This novel by Smith is loosely based on Ovid's story "Iphis and Ianthe" from his *Metamorphoses*. It is about two sisters, Anthea and Imogen, who live in a small Scottish town in their grandparents house. Their grandparents disappeared while sailing Europe and left the house to the girls. The novel begins with a memory of their grandfather telling them a story which begins, "Let me tell you about when I was a girl," which brings squeals of delight and giggles from the little girls sitting in his lap. So it begins happily enough but we soon find out there is trouble in paradise. Both girls work for a corporation called Pure, a bottled water company, which is not all that it seems. While Imogen is moving her way up the corporate ladder, Anthea is unhappy at work and feels out of place. Then one day Anthea is looking out of the window at work and sees what she thinks is a young man in a kilt writing graffiti about Pure on Pure's walls and signing his work Iphis. Anthea is intrigued so she rushes out of the office to check it out. Upon getting close to this stranger, Anthea thinks: "He was the most beautiful boy I had ever seen in my life. But he looked really like a girl." It turns out to be a girl, a girl named Robin, who had gone to school with the sisters and Imogen remembers her as being weird even then. But soon Robin and Anthea begin a guerilla warfare type of campaign against Pure and start posting their messages all over town. Meanwhile Imogen get a promotion for a creative idea she has and is sent to Pure's base camp to meet with the boss, Keith, who turns out to be an evil mastermind after world dominance. This totally turns Imogen around about the corporation and what she is doing with her life. Without telling everything about the novel I will stop here and let you read it for yourself. It is a delightful little novel and not at all like most of the stories in Ovid's "Metamorphoses" as it is much too lighthearted for that. Imogen, Anthea, and Robin are all delightfully delicious characters who you will fall in love with. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Good enough but nothing life-changing By Rachel A good enough book, but not one that moved me in a life-changing way. Smith doesn't quite pull off the abstractions where she wanders into the Iphis myth, but I respect her for making the effort to do something that you don't find in every lesbian love story you come across. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Customer Good condition.

From the astonishingly talented writer of *The Accidental* and *Hotel World* comes Ali Smith's brilliant retelling of Ovid's gender-bending myth of Iphis and Ianthe, as seen through the eyes of two Scottish sisters. *Girl Meets Boy* is about girls and boys, girls and girls, love and transformation, and the absurdity of consumerism, as well as a story of reversals and revelations that is as sharply witty as it is lyrical. Funny, fresh, poetic, and political, *Girl Meets Boy* is a myth of metamorphosis for a world made in Madison Avenue's image, and the funniest addition to the Myths series from Canongate since Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad*.

"A compact, rollicking novel . . . Ovid's gender-bending metamorphosis story gets a Madison Avenue-style makeover." "Girl Meets Boy pulls you in and doesn't let you go. Never afraid of big ideas, morality or politics, Smith's retelling is bold and brilliant." "Cheerful, sexy, disorienting . . . Smith's spare and sharp lyricism . . . are handled with glee . . . and Smith's cadences, which read like classical drama, carry the novel along beautifully." About the Author Ali Smith's first book, *Free Love*, won the Saltire First Book Award. She is also the author of *Like* (1997); *Other Stories And Other Stories* (1999); *Hotel World* (2001), which was shortlisted for both the Orange Prize and the Booker Prize, and won the Encore Award; *The Whole Story and Other Stories* (2003) and *The Accidental* (2005), which was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize and the Orange Prize and won the Whitbread Novel of the Year Award. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. I Let me tell you about when I was a girl, our grandfather says. It is Saturday evening; we always stay at their house on Saturdays. The couch and the chairs are shoved back against the walls. The teak coffee table from the middle of the room is up under the window. The floor has been cleared for the backward and forward somersaults, the juggling with oranges and eggs, the how-to-do-a-cartwheel, how-to-stand-on-your-head, how-to-walk-on-your-hands lessons. Our grandfather holds us upside-down by the legs until we get our balance. Our grandfather worked in a circus before he met and married our grandmother. He once did headstands on top of a whole troupe of headstanders. He once walked a tightrope across the Thames. The Thames is a river in London, which is five hundred and twenty-seven miles from here, according to the mileage chart in the RAC book in among our fathers books at home. Oh, across the Thames, was it? our grandmother says. Not across the falls at Niagara? Ah, Niagara, our grandfather says. Now that was a whole other kittle of fish. It is after gymnastics and it is before Blind Date. Sometimes after gymnastics it is The Generation Game instead. Back in history The Generation Game was our mothers favourite programme, way before we were born, when she was as small as us. But our mother isnt here any more, and anyway we prefer Blind Date, where every week without fail a boy chooses a girl from three girls and a girl chooses a boy from three boys, with a screen and Cilla Black in between them each time. Then the chosen boys and girls from last weeks programme come back and talk about their blind date, which has usually been awful, and there is always excitement about whether there'll be a wedding, which is what its called before people get divorced, and to which Cilla Black will get to wear a hat. But which is Cilla Black, then, boy or girl? She doesnt seem to be either. She can look at the boys if she wants; she can go round the screen and look at the girls. She can go between the two sides of things like a magician, or a joke. The audience always laughs with delight when she does it. You're being ridiculous, Anthea, Midge says shrugging her eyes at me. Cilla Black is from the sixties, our

grandmother says as if that explains everything. It is Saturday tea-time, after supper and before our bath. It is always exciting to sit in the chairs in the places they usually aren't. Midge and I, one on each knee, are on our grandfathers lap and all three of us are wedged into the pushed-back armchair waiting for our grandmother to settle. She drags her own armchair closer to the electric fire. She puts her whole weight behind the coffee table and shoves it over so she can watch the football results. You don't need the sound up for that. Then she neatens the magazines on the under-rack of the table and then she sits down. Steam rises off teacups. We've got the taste of buttered toast in our mouths. At least, I assume we all have it, since we've all been eating the same toast, well, different bits of the same toast. Then I start to worry. Because what if we all taste things differently? What if each bit of toast tastes completely different? After all, the two bits I've eaten definitely tasted a bit different even from each other. I look round the room, from head to head of each of us. Then I taste the taste in my own mouth again. So did I never tell you about the time they put me in jail for a week when I was a girl? our grandfather says. What for? I say. For saying you were a girl when you weren't one, Midge says. For writing words, our grandfather says. What words? I say. NO VOTES NO GOLF, our grandfather says. They put us in jail because we wrote it into the golf green with acid, me and my friend. What's a young girl like you wanting acid for? the chemist asked me when I went to get it. Grandad, stop it, Midge says. What's a girl like you wanting with fifteen bottles of it? he said. I told him the truth, more fool me. I want to write words on the golf course with it, I told him and he sold me it, right enough, but then he went and told Harry Cathcart at the police station exactly who'd been round buying a job lot of acid. We were proud to go to jail, though. I was proud when they came to get me. I said to them all at the police station, I'm doing this because my mother can't write her name with words, never mind vote. Your great-grandmother wrote her name with Xs. X X X. Mary Isobel Gunn. And when we went on the Mud March, our grandfather says. Boy oh boy. It was called the Mud March because because why? Because of some mud, I say. Because of the mud we got all up the hems of our skirts, our grandfather says. Grandad, Midge says. Don't. You should've heard the mix of accents coming out of us all, it was like a huge flock of all the different birds, all in the sky, all singing at once. Blackbirds and chaffinches and seagulls and thrushes and starlings and swifts and peewits, imagine. From all over the country we came, from Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool, Huddersfield, Leeds, all the girls that worked in clothing, because that's what most of us did, textiles I mean, and from Glasgow, from Fife, even from right up here we went. Soon they were so afraid of us marching that they made brand new laws against us. They said we could only march in groups of no more than twelve of us. And each group of twelve girls had to be fifty yards away from any other group of twelve. And what do you think they threw at us for marching, what do you think they threw at us when we spoke in front of the great hordes of listening people? Eggs and oranges, I say. Mud. Tomatoes and fishheads, Midge says. And what did we throw at the Treasury, at the Home Office, at the Houses of Parliament? he says. Fishheads, I say. I am finding the idea of throwing fishheads at official historic buildings very funny. Our grandfather tightens his hold round me. No, he says. Stones, to break the windows. Not very ladylike, Midge says from the other side of his head. Actually, Miss Midge, our grandfather says. My names not Midge, Midge says. Actually, as it happens, we were very ladylike indeed. We threw the stones in little linen bags that we'd made ourselves with our own hands especially to put the stones in. That's how ladylike we were. But never mind that. Never mind that. Listen to this. Are you listening? Are you ready? Here we go, our grandmother says. Did I never tell you about the time when I was a really important, couldn't-be-done-without part of the smuggling-out-of-the-country of Burning Lily herself, the famous Building-Burning-Girl of the North East? No, I say. No, Midge says. Well, I will then. Will I? our grandfather says. Yes, I say. Okay, Midge says. Are you sure? he says. Yes! we say together. Burning Lily, he says, was famous. She was famous for lots of things. She was a dancer, and she was very very beautiful. Always the eye for the lasses, our grandmother says with her own eyes on the television. And one day, our grandfather says, on her twenty-first birthday, the day that the beautiful (though not near as beautiful as your grandmother, obviously) the day that the beautiful Burning Lily became a fully fledged grown-up which is what's supposed to happen on the day you're twenty-one she looked in the mirror and said to herself, I've had enough of this. I'm going to change things. So she went straight out and broke a window as a birthday present to herself. Ridiculous present, Midge says. I'm asking for a Mini Cooper for mine. But soon she decided that breaking windows, though it was a good start, wasn't quite enough. So she started setting fire to buildings buildings that didn't have any people in them. That worked. That got their attention. She was always being carted off to jail then. And in there, in jail, in her cell, you know what she did? What? Midge says. She just stopped eating, he says. Why? I say and as I say it I taste the toast taste again all through the inside of me. Because she was like anorexic, Midge says, and had seen too many pictures of herself in magazines. Because there wasn't anything else for her to do, our grandfather says to me over the top of Midge's head. They all did it, to protest, then. We'd all have done it. I'd have done it too. So would you. Well I wouldn't, Midge says. Yes you would. You'd do it too, if it was the only thing you could do. So then they made Burning Lily eat. How? I said. You can't make someone eat. By putting a tube down her throat and by putting food down the tube. Except, they put it down the wrong part of her throat, into her windpipe, by mistake, and they pumped food right into her lungs. Why? I say. Uch, Midge says. Rob, our grandmother says. They have to know, our grandfather says. It's true. It happened. And that thing with putting the tube into her windpipe had made her very very ill, so they had to let her out of the jail because she nearly died. And that would have been very bad publicity for the police and the jail and the government. But by the time Burning Lily

got better theyd passed a new law which said: As soon as one of those girls has made herself better out there, and isnt going to die here in jail, on our hands, as if it was us who killed her, we can go straight back out and arrest her again. But you know what? What? I say. What? Midge says. Burning Lily kept on slipping through their fingers. She kept on getting away with it. She kept on setting fire to the empty buildings. She was like a lunatic, Midge says. Only empty buildings, mind, our grandfather says. I will never endanger any human life except my own, she said. I always call out when I go into the building to make sure no one is in it. But I will carry on doing it for as long as it takes to change things for the better. Thats what she said in court. She used lots of different names in court. Lilian. Ida. May. It was before they knew what everyone looked like, like they do today, so she could slip through their fingers like water does if you clench your fist round it. It was before they used film and photos like they do now, to know who everyone is. I hold up my hand, in a fist. I open it, then close it. And she kept on doing it, he says. And the police were always after her. And next time, we knew, shed surely die, she would die if they got her again, because she was too weak to do that starving thing many more times. And one day, now, are you listening? Yes, we say. One day, our grandfather says, one of our friends came round to my house and told me: Tomorrow youve got to dress up as a message boy. Whats a message boy? I say. Shh, Midge says. I was small, our grandfather says, I was nineteen, but I could pass for twelve or thirteen. And I looked a bit like a boy. Yeah, Midge says, cause you were one. Shh, I say. And I checked through the clothes shed brought me in the bag, our grandfather says, they were pretty clean, they didnt smell too bad, they smelt a bit leathery, a bit of the smell of boys. Uch, Midge says. Whats the smell of boys? I say. And it looked likely that theyd fit me. And lo and behold, they did. So I put them on the next morning, and I got into the grocers van that stopped for me outside the door. And the girl driving the truck got out, and a boy took over the wheel, and she gave the boy a kiss as she got out. And before she got into the back of the van in under the canvas the girl gave me a rolled-up comic and an apple, and a basket of things, tea, sugar, a cabbage, some carrots. And she said, pull your cap down low and put your head inside the comic now, and start eating at that apple when you get out of the van. So I did those things, I did what she said, I opened the comic at random and held it up in front of me, and the pictures juggled up and down in front of my eyes all the way there, and when we got to the right house the boy driving stopped the van, and the front door of the house opened, and a woman shouted, All right! Its here! And I went round the back, thats where message boys were supposed to go, I was down behind the comic, and I took two bites out of the apple, which was a big one, apples were a lot bigger then, back in the days when I was a girl. This time Midge doesnt say anything. She is completely listening, like I am. And in the corridor of the big old house I saw myself in a mirror, except it wasnt a mirror, and it wasnt me. It was someone else dressed exactly the same, it was a fine-looking boy wearing the exact same clothes. But he was very very handsome, and that was how I knew he wasnt me and I wasnt him. Rob, our grandmother says. From the Hardcover edition.