

THE MARRIAGE OF ALICE B. TOKLAS BY GERTRUDE STEIN

by

Edward Einhorn

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215 W. 95th Street, Apt 6B

New York, NY 10025

Tel no. (917) 669-2067

Email: theaterofideas@gmail.com

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Actors will all be portraying a variety of characters. However, each has a primary identity, as follows:

GERTRUDE STEIN
ALICE TOKLAS
ERNEST HEMINGWAY
PABLO PICASSO

In the original, all roles except Hemingway were played by women. In general, the gender of the actors is flexible, though there should be at least two women in the cast.

SUMMARY

A marriage farce in which four actors play over thirty characters, celebrating the union of perhaps the best known same sex couple of the 20th century. Picasso has brought two of his mistresses and one of his wives. Hemingway has also brought his wife but is more obsessed by his matador. Meanwhile, all involved discuss matters of art, genius, friendship, religion, genius, sexuality, money, genius, fame, and of course love. Identities are merged and submerged. Written in a style that echoes Stein's work, this is a comic fantasy with serious intent.

SETTING

The setting is always within Gertrude Stein's salon, or some interpretation thereof. The "scenes" are more like chapters. They are entitled as follow

Introduction

Act 1, Scene 1: The Courtship
Act 1, Scene 2: Homosexuals
Act 1, Scene 3: Picasso Brings a Present
Act 1, Scene 4: The Arrival of the Guests
Act 1, Scene 5: The Menu
Act 1, Scene 6: Three Geniuses and Hemingway
Act 1, Scene 7: Matadors
Act 1, Scene 8: The Bride Prepares
Act 1, Scene 9: The Marriage Ceremony
Act 1, Scene 10: The Wedding Night

Act 2, Scene 1: A Funny Thing
Act 2, Scene 2: Money
Act 2, Scene 3: Hemingway Crashes the Party
Act 2, Scene 4: The Arrival of the Guests, Once More the Arrival of the Guests
Act 2, Scene 5: A Farce
Act 2, Scene 6: Gertrude Stein Makes a Speech.

The Marriage of Alice B. Toklas by Gertrude Stein

By Edward Einhorn

(The play is set in Gertrude Stein's salon. There should be paintings—lots of paintings, either copies of the painting found in her salon, or maybe just many, many copies of the famous Picasso painting of Stein, or maybe just empty frames that imply paintings. Also, there should be doors, at least two, maybe many more, this play is a farce of sorts, or rather it claims to be a farce. Or perhaps there are no doors either. I suspect furniture, but will not venture a further opinion on the matter. GERTRUDE and ALICE either enter or start onstage. They are wearing something white and suggestive of bridal dresses without being bridal dresses. Likewise, HEMINGWAY and PICASSO—who are not yet onstage but, if all goes well, soon will be—should be costumed to resemble groomsman eventually. In the original production they began in clothes more stereotypically associated with the historical Picasso and Hemingway.)

Introduction

GERTRUDE

This is a play about Alice Toklas. In this play which is a play about Alice Toklas I play Gertrude Stein pretending to be Alice Toklas pretending to be Gertrude Stein.

ALICE

This is a play about Gertrude Stein. In this play which is a play about Gertrude Stein I play Alice Toklas pretending to be Gertrude Stein pretending to be Alice Toklas.

GERTRUDE

In this play, Gertrude and Alice and Alice and Gertrude and Gertrude and Gertrude and Alice get married.

ALICE

In that sentence, there are four Gertrudes and three Alices. That is because Gertrude loves Alice. If there were no Alices in the sentence, Gertrude and Alice wouldn't be getting married. If there were one Alice, that would be too few Alices. If there were two Alices, Gertrude might still love Alice, but not as much as with three Alices. If there were four Alices, Gertrude might not be able to love Alice as much, because there would be as many Alices as Gertrudes. If there were five Alices, that would be too many Alices.

GERTRUDE

Gertrude is the husband. Alice is the wife. Gertrude, who is the husband, is also the wife. Alice, who is the wife, is the wife.

ALICE

It is a French farce.

(A door opens. PICASSO, playing Picasso's naked model, enters, holding a sheet to herself as she runs through the salon. She might run out the door, or alternative hide behind a divan or similar furniture)

GERTRUDE

This is Picasso, pretending to be Picasso's model, pretending to be Picasso's mistress, pretending to be Picasso's wife.

(PICASSO is heard through the door)

PICASSO (PLAYING PICASSO, WIFE, AND MISTRESS)

"Who was that?" "She was only a model!" "I don't believe you!" "She was, I tell you!" "I am not just a model, I am his mistress!" "She's lying!" "Not, I'm not." "Pablo, why do you torture me..."

ALICE

Picasso mistakenly invited two of his mistresses and one of his wives to our wedding.

GERTRUDE

I don't believe it was a mistake.

(A door opens. A naked MAN holding a red cape to himself runs through the room. He might run out and be heard behind the door, or maybe rest on the divan if there is a divan.)

ALICE

This is Hemingway, pretending to be a matador.

GERTRUDE

I think he is in love with that matador.

HEMINGWAY

You are the bravest man I know because you have a love of killing, and your tongue is both the pleasantest and most wicked for you speak only as a man who contains within him the pure joy of killing can speak.

ALICE

His wife is here too,

HEMINGWAY (PLAYING HEMINGWAY AND WIFE)

“Who was that man, Hem?” “He was a bullfighter, Hadley, he was fine and noble and if you want to fuck him it is only right and his due. I would like to watch.”

GERTRUDE

Hemingway and his wife and matador and Picasso and his wives and mistresses are all guests at our wedding along with many other geniuses and wives of geniuses and mistresses of the geniuses.

ALICE

I may say that only three times in my life have I met a genius and each time a bell within me rang and I was not mistaken. The three geniuses of whom I wish to speak are Gertrude Stein, Pablo Picasso and Alfred North Whitehead.

(HEMINGWAY sticks his head out the door or speaks from onstage.)

HEMINGWAY

And Ernest Hemingway!

ALICE

I have only known three first class geniuses and in each case on sight within me something rang. The three geniuses of whom I wish to speak are Gertrude Stein, Pablo Picasso and Alfred Whitehead.

(HEMINGWAY exits, slamming the door.)

GERTRUDE

Act one. Scene one.

The courtship of Alice. I will be pretending to be Gertrude. Alice will be pretending to be Alice.

Act 1, Scene 1: The Courtship

GERTRUDE

Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose.

ALICE

Stop talking to me about Rose.

GERTRUDE

I wrote it about you. I didn't actually write it about you, but now that I know you, I wrote it about you.

ALICE

Oh.

(Pause.)

I like it.

(Pause.)

GERTRUDE

Scene one. The courtship of Alice. I will be pretending to be Alice. Alice will be pretending to be Gertrude.

ALICE (GERTRUDE)

Pussy Pussy Pussy, please, Pussy—

GERTRUDE (ALICE)

Yes, Lovey, yes.

ALICE (GERTRUDE)

Baby. Queen. Cherubim. Little Jew.

GERTRUDE (ALICE)

Mount Fattie. Fattuski.

(Pause.)

GERTRUDE

Scene one. The courtship of Alice. I will be pretending to be Gertrude. Alice will be pretending to be Gertrude.

(ALICE rings a bell)

ALICE (GERTRUDE)

I am a genius.

GERTRUDE

Yes, I am a genius.

(ALICE rings a bell)

ALICE (GERTRUDE)

I am a genius.

GERTRUDE

Yes, I am a genius.

(Pause.)

Scene one. The courtship of Alice. I will be pretending to be Alice. Alice will be pretending to be Alice.

ALICE

I love Gertrude.

GERTRUDE (ALICE)

I think Gertrude loves me too.

ALICE

Gertrude has not yet said I love you.

GERTRUDE (ALICE)

Gertrude says I love you without saying I love you.

ALICE

I would prefer if Gertrude said I love you by saying I love you.

GERTRUDE (ALICE)

Gertrude loves me.

ALICE

How do you know? You are not Gertrude.

GERTRUDE (ALICE)

I am not Gertrude but also I am Gertrude.

ALICE

If you are Gertrude and you are saying Gertrude loves me are you saying Gertrude loves Gertrude?

GERTRUDE (ALICE)

I am Gertrude pretending to be Alice so when I say Gertrude loves me I mean Gertrude loves Alice.

ALICE

When you say Gertrude loves Alice do you mean in the way that others have loved her before?

GERTRUDE (ALICE)

When I say Gertrude loves Alice I mean in a way no one has loved her before, in the way a husband loves a wife, in the way that is now and is now and is now and will always be now. In a way that is wedded, is wedded to a bed, in a way that will be wedded, for when one is wedded, one is wedded to a bed. In a way that every regular day becomes a day that is regularly gay.

ALICE

Alice loves Gertrude too.

(Pause.)

GERTRUDE

Scene two. Gertrude explains to Hemingway about homosexuals

Act 1, Scene 2: Homosexuals

(HEMINGWAY enters.)

HEMINGWAY

All I know is that when you are a boy in the company of men you need to be prepared to kill a man, know how to do it and really know you would do it in order not to be interfered with.

GERTRUDE

You are speaking of criminals and perverts.

HEMINGWAY

I am also speaking of old men with beautiful manners who visit you in the hospital and bring you Masala or Campari.

GERTRUDE

You are speaking of pitiable men.

HEMINGWAY

I am speaking of men who corrupt you for the pleasure of corruption and lead people into practices.

GERTRUDE

Don't be silly, who could corrupt you, a boy like you, who drinks whiskey all day long, with one bottle of Masala or Campari?

HEMINGWAY

I was disappointed because he had such beautiful manners.

GERTRUDE

What you do not understand is that men who are homosexuals are vile and disgusting, but women who are homosexuals do nothing disgusting and are happy together.

HEMINGWAY

I want to tell you something but I can't say it in front of Alice.

GERTRUDE

Go ahead, say what you want. Alice is pretending to be Gertrude.

HEMINGWAY

I would very much like to bang you. I think you need someone to bang you and I'm volunteering for the job. I don't care if you look like a peasant woman, I don't care that you are a Jew, I don't care if you are a homosexual, in fact it turns me on.

ALICE (GERTRUDE)

I would very much like to bang you too. But I can't. Alice would be jealous.

HEMINGWAY

You need someone to bang you, I tell you.

ALICE (GERTRUDE)

Alice is going to bang me. She banged me last night and she banged me this afternoon and tonight she's going to bang me again.

GERTRUDE

When I make Alice climax it is like she is making a cow come out, she lifts up her belly and moos and a cow comes out.

HEMINGWAY

Well, ain't that the way.

(HEMINGWAY exits.)

GERTRUDE

Scene Three. Picasso brings a present. I am pretending to be me, Alice is pretending to be Alice, and Picasso is pretending to be Picasso.

Act 1, Scene 3: Picasso Brings a Present

(PICASSO enters. He is carrying a frame. ALICE rings a bell.)

PICASSO

I have brought you a little something, in honor of the occasion.

GERTRUDE

Is it a painting?

PICASSO

Yes.

GERTRUDE

Is it of me?

PICASSO

Yes. I have also brought something for Alice.

(PICASSO flips frame.)

ALICE

Is it a painting?

PICASSO

Yes.

ALICE

Is it of Gertrude?

PICASSO

Yes.

GERTRUDE

Thank you, it's just what we wanted.

(PICASSO hangs frame.)

PICASSO

Let me give you some advice about marriage. You must try to only have one mistress at a time. Or if you must have more than one mistress, separate them by days, have your Sunday mistress and your Wednesday mistress, but never see your Sunday mistress on a Wednesday or your Wednesday mistress on a Sunday. Never let them meet unless you must, and if they do meet try not to let them speak to each other alone. The maximum number of mistresses one should have at a time is five, for never forget there is also your wife, and on one day, like the Lord, you must rest.

GERTRUDE

If this is true, Pablo, why did you bring two mistresses and one wife to our wedding?

PICASSO

One I was simply painting yesterday in the nude, posing her upon your divan, and forgot about entirely, it seems. I left her here in perfect recline, and found her still in that pose when I arrived today. Her concentration is impressive, I don't believe she broke form once, not even for the necessities. The rest is inconvenient timing on your part—you chose to hold the wedding on a Sunday, so of course I had to invite my Sunday mistress to come. Unfortunately, you also sent an invitation to my wife.

ALICE

I had to, she was my French teacher.

GERTRUDE

Alice handled the invitations and the guest list and the catering and the music during the ceremony and the officiant and the music after the ceremony. I wrote the vows.

PICASSO

I look forward to them.

GERTRUDE

So tell me what you are working on.

PICASSO

Yes, I am just engaged to work on an exciting production with Jean Cocteau...

(ALICE steps forward. GERTRUDE and PICASSO speak softly behind her.)

ALICE

Miss Stein and Mr. Picasso are currently engaged in talking about art. What they are saying right now is well beyond what you or I can comprehend. So while they speak, I thought I would tell you about a funny little dream I had. In my dream, Gertrude and I had died and we were living in an apartment very much like this apartment, but the floor was made of clouds, so it felt like I was sinking, sinking all the time. And Moses came to visit us and so did Abraham and Solomon and it was just like our little salon here in Paris, except that it was in Heaven, and everything was sinking, sinking. And I could tell they were all geniuses, because when I saw them I heard three bells. And Solomon was working on a long poem, and it was the Song of Solomon of course, and I said, yes, we used that in our ceremony, in our wedding ceremony, and Solomon was surprised, and he asked what wedding ceremony, and I said the wedding ceremony for me and my wife. And Solomon asked aren't you a woman, and I said yes, and he said you also have a wife, and I said yes, and he said how is that possible, and I said everything is possible, everything is possible when you're in love. And now we had sunk so far that we had almost sunk through the clouds, and we were just bobbing heads, me and Gertrude and Solomon and Moses and Abraham. And I tried to talk to him and explain about me and Gertrude and love but the clouds filled my mouth and they felt like damp cotton and it felt as if I was suffocating and drowning all at once. And I could see that Solomon and Gertrude were talking and I wondered about what but I couldn't hear because there was cotton in my ears too, and then there was cotton in my eyes, and then I woke up! What a funny little dream!

GERTRUDE

Alice!

ALICE

Yes, Gertrude?

GERTRUDE

It is time for scene four. The Arrival of the Guests.

(PICASSO exits.)

Act 1, Scene 4: The Arrival of the Guests

GERTRUDE

I am pretending to be Leo.

ALICE

Leo isn't here. We didn't invite him.

GERTRUDE (LEO)

Nonetheless, I am pretending to be Leo.

ALICE

Hello Leo, how surprising to see you here. Or not see you here, as the case may be.

GERTRUDE (LEO)

I don't like you.

ALICE

Yes, I know. That's why I didn't invite you.

GERTRUDE (LEO)

I don't like you because you took my sister away from me. I don't like you because you live in my apartment surrounded by my art making love to my sister. It's not that I don't like you because you are a lesbian, it's that I don't like lesbians because I don't like you.

ALICE

Yes, I know.

GERTRUDE (LEO)

Is Gertrude here?

ALICE

No, Gertrude's pretending she isn't here and you are, while the opposite is actually true. Take a seat, Gertrude should be back soon.

(PICASSO and HEMINGWAY enter.)

PICASSO (BEACH)

I am pretending to be Sylvia Beach. Hello, Alice, this is the big day then!

ALICE

Yes, it is! We're so glad you could be with us. Do you know my brother-in-law, Leo?

PICASSO (BEACH)

Yes of course. Congratulations, you must be very happy for your sister!

GERTRUDE (LEO)

No, not at all. It is not that I don't like Alice because she is a lesbian—.

PICASSO (BEACH/ADRIENNE)

Oh, I forgot to mention, I am also simultaneously pretending to be Sylvia's wife, Adrienne. Good chatting with you, Leo.

GERTRUDE (LEO)

I am sorry I am so dreadful to talk to. You must understand, when I was close to Gertrude, I used to be so intelligent, so cultured, but now I have become mostly unpleasant.

ALICE

And here is Hemingway, pretending to be James Joyce.

HEMINGWAY (JOYCE)

Sylvia! I was hoping I would see you here. I wanted to talk to you about some revisions I had...

PICASSO (BEACH)

You already sent me those.

HEMINGWAY (JOYCE)

No, these are some new ones. Just scribbled them down the other day, let me find them.

PICASSO (ELIOT)

I'm sorry, now I'm pretending to be T. S. Eliot.

HEMINGWAY (JOYCE)

One cannot work as a banker and create. You must find a way to leave that so you can fulfill your promise.

PICASSO (ELIOT)

That's all very well, but what am I to live on?

HEMINGWAY (POUND)

You must listen to Ezra Pound, on this, in fact I'm pretending to be Pound, hell of a man, top rate, would help a fellow in need, any fellow.

GERTRUDE (LEO)

Not a Jew.

HEMINGWAY (POUND)

No, not a Jew, but any *fellow* in need. I'm collecting a fund for you, Eliot, so you can leave that damned bank job of yours and spend your time the way a genius should be spending his time, writing.

ALICE

I have only met three first class geniuses, and they were—

HEMINGWAY (POUND)

Yes, I know, maybe you should revise your bell system, maybe if it doesn't include Eliot here it's not such a good system, and what about Joyce, and what about Hemingway. Tell me that, what about Hemingway?

PICASSO (WHITEHEAD)

Now I'm pretending to be Alfred North Whitehead.

(ALICE rings a bell.)

ALICE

Here he is! I'm so glad to see you! You geniuses all have most sweet, the most generous of natures. I just knew it, as soon as I heard the bell, I just knew you must be a genius. And Hemingway here is pretending to be your wife, Evelyn, so good to see you Evelyn.

HEMINGWAY

I am not pretending to be Evelyn.

ALICE

I was just saying to your husband, how very simple and kind you both are. You would hardly guess he was a genius, but Gertrude knows and I know because of my sixth sense.

HEMINGWAY

And what about Hemingway?

ALICE

Oh no, Evelyn, Hemingway, he tries to write as well as Gertrude, his early work, it showed promise, but now it's all death and violence and bulls, isn't it?

HEMINGWAY (ANDERSON)

Now I am pretending to be Sherwood Anderson. Hello, Alice, shall we say some nasty things about Hemingway, he mocked me in his last article and I'm not man enough to take it. Say, I do admire Gertrude, she can't write anymore and I can't write anymore, but I admire her anyway, maybe even more than if either of us could write as well as Hemingway does now.

ALICE

Hello Sherwood, how good to see you, you've always been a good friend. Please tell Hemingway when you see him that I have a toothache and the wedding is called off, no need for him to attend.

GERTRUDE (SARAH)

No, don't send him away yet, because I am pretending to be my sister-in-law Sarah Stein, and I need Hemingway to pretend to be her husband Michael. And Picasso must be Matisse for a moment! I am so glad to see you, my old friend.

PICASSO (MATISSE)

And you, Sarah. You are always in my heart.

ALICE

Oh yes, there's Juan Gris and Guillaume Apollinaire who is unfortunately dead and Max Jacob and Man Ray and Jean Cocteau and his husband and lovers. Picasso is pretending to be them all.

PICASSO (MANY ARTISTS)

Hello, hello, hello, so good to see you, congratulations, hello.

GERTRUDE

Now I am pretending to be Gertrude. Welcome, welcome, everybody, thank you for coming. Alice, you and the other wives must get together and discuss the Wedding Menu in Scene Five, while I chat with all the geniuses. Pablo Picasso will be pretending to be Mrs. Pablo Picasso. Ernest Hemingway will be pretending to be Mrs. Ernest Hemingway. Alice Toklas will be pretending to be Mrs. Gertrude Stein. I will be pretending to be in the other room.

Act 1, Scene 5: The Menu

GERTRUDE

For cocktails:

HEMINGWAY (MRS. HEMMINGWAY)

Make it cold, that's how he likes it. Freeze the glass. Freeze the Spanish cocktail onions, freeze them at 14 degrees below. Use ice that's dense, thick and long, freeze it in a tennis ball can. The ice should be one degree colder than the onion, 15 degrees below. Freeze the vermouth, Noilly Prat, 1 part, just enough to cover the bottom of the glass. Freeze the gin, Gordons, 94 proof, 15 parts, let it balance on the edge till it threatens to tip out with a single vibration. 15 to 1, just the odds that coward Montgomery insisted on before he would take his troops into combat, 15 of his men to every one of the enemy's. Place the drink in a tray, set the first before Hemingway. He can drink it. He will demonstrate. He has the trick. If a thief ever tried to take hold of that v-shaped glass, his fingers would stick to it, stick like a fly on paper. The coldest martini in the world. Some people have God. Hem has his martini. Drink.

GERTRUDE

For the entrée:

PICASSO (MRS. PICASSO)

Go to Max Jacob and ask if you can use his stove. This recipe needs to feed the whole party, so you need that stove, you need the space to cook. Don't invite Max of course, he is too disruptive, he must understand that. Bring your paella pan. If your paella pan is still in Spain, you must find a substitute, for example Max's crock pot. The quality of the rice is paramount. You start with the rabbit and chicken, let them simmer in olive oil, then discard almost all of the fat, leaving only a thin coating, and then it's onions and cloves and tomatoes and paprika. And then the rice, finally the rice. Put in some stock and cook. Then run to the party, see who Picasso is flirting with, run to the crock pot, more stock, back to the party, yell at a mistress, back to the crock pot, more stock, back again to the party, another mistress, back to the crock pot again, and at last, it is ready. Let it cool for five minutes, then have Max help you carry it. Explain he must leave you when you reach the door. Et voila! Riz a la Valenciennes!

GERTRUDE

For dessert:

ALICE

The first difficulty lies in obtaining the cannabis. Cannabis sativa is preferred, though cannabis indica will do in a pinch. You can even find some in the Luxembourg Gardens, if you look hard enough, it's a weed, it grows everywhere. The cannabis should be picked and dried while it's still green, before it goes to seed. You'll also need one teaspoon black peppercorns, one whole nutmeg, four cinnamon sticks, and a teaspoon of coriander. Pulverise them in a mortar. Pulverise the cannabis too. Add figs, almonds, peanuts, all chopped. Sugar, butter, roll it into cake and make each piece the size of a walnut. Eat with care. Expect euphoria, brilliant storms of laughter, ecstatic reveries, and extensions of one's personality on several simultaneous planes. Two pieces are quite sufficient.

GERTRUDE

My goodness, what adventures you ladies get up to while I am out of the room. Which brings me to Scene Six, Three Geniuses. I will be pretending to be Gertrude Stein. Picasso will be pretending to be Picasso.

ALICE

I will be pretending to be Alfred North Whitehead.

HEMINGWAY

And I will be pretending to be Hemingway.

GERTRUDE

Very well, if you wish. I do have a weakness for you, Hemingway. Scene Six. Three Geniuses and Hemingway.

Act 1, Scene 6: Three Geniuses and Hemingway

(Long pause.)

PICASSO

Well.

ALICE (WHITEHEAD)

Yes?

GERTRUDE

Hmmm.

(Pause.)

HEMINGWAY

Well, I—

GERTRUDE

Patience Ernie.

ALICE (WHITEHEAD)

We are not speaking now. We are thinking.

GERTRUDE

When we are done, you can speak.

HEMINGWAY

How long will that take.

GERTRUDE

It takes a lot of time to be a genius.

ALICE (WHITEHEAD)

You have to sit around.

PICASSO

Doing nothing.

GERTRUDE

Really nothing.

(Pause.)

HEMINGWAY

Well, it's a goddamn waste of time, if you ask me.

GERTRUDE

Ernie, why do you not give up all this writing about war and death and concentrate on your more vulnerable side? You might be able to become a first class genius, not just a near genius or a would-be genius.

ALICE (WHITEHEAD)

I think to be a first class genius you need to be a Spaniard, a homosexual, or a Jew.

PICASSO

But you are none of those things, Alfred.

ALICE (WHITEHEAD)

True, and I am a genius nonetheless. There is no explaining it.

PICASSO

It is true that Spaniards have a flair for genius. But it is not enough to be a Spaniard. One must be born with the spark. You are a Jew, Gertrude, and your brother is a Jew. But you are a genius and he is not.

GERTRUDE

Which is why we do not speak.

HEMINGWAY

I thought you didn't speak because Alice was jealous of him.

GERTRUDE

We don't speak because of something he said to me. It destroyed him for me, and it destroyed me for him.

PICASSO

Something that troubled you.

GERTRUDE

It did not trouble me, as I knew it was not true.

HEMINGWAY

What did he say?

GERTRUDE

He didn't say anything to me but he said it so it would be true for me.

ALICE (WHITEHEAD)

He said it because he did not have a little bell, like Alice has a little bell. If he had had a little bell, he would never have said it.

GERTRUDE

Nonetheless, he said it. And he believed, which is worse than saying it. I didn't mind what he said, I minded what he believed. After so many years together, so many years, it was what he believed.

(GERTRUDE pauses, upset. ALICE comforts her.)

ALICE (WHITEHEAD)

When someone believes something that is not true, just because he doesn't have a little bell...you don't need to be a mathematician or a genius like me to know he needs to leave. Alice knew it, and she is neither a mathematician nor a genius.

GERTRUDE

For a time, we were always together. Always had been. Always were. But then a seed grew in me, but did not grow in him. And I knew that seed was genius.

HEMINGWAY

You know what I think. I think there are some people who the world allows to pretend they are geniuses, but if they were someone else, if the words they write were written by someone else who no one knew and who didn't associate with geniuses, why he...or she, that person might not be a genius at all. Perhaps the world would call that writing nonsense, not genius.

GERTRUDE

I didn't ask you to pretend to be Leo.

HEMINGWAY

No, you didn't.

GERTRUDE

It is funny, this thing of being a genius. There is no reason for it, no reason that it should have been me and not have been him, no reason it should not have been him, no no reason at all.

ALICE

No no reason.

GERTRUDE

No reason at all. Not at all. The only thing about it is, I am the genius and he is not.

PICASSO

And yet you are both Jews.

ALICE (WHITEHEAD)

Likewise, Gertrude, you and Hemingway are both homosexuals.

(HEMINGWAY stands up with anger.)

HEMINGWAY

Listen here, Whitehead, if you were not a mathematician, and if were not my policy, as a man of honor, to never strike a mathematician, I would knock you down right here, and believe me, not one of your algorithms would do you one bit of good. But as it is, I am a man of honor, and you are a mathematician, and you know that and you use it to your advantage, but I can tell you, even a man of honor can be pushed too far.

GERTRUDE

Sit down, Ernie, you are being a bore.

(Pause.)

HEMINGWAY

Picasso, why is it that your painting have become so ugly? I used to admire your work. But now you seem in that class of artists who try to convince the public that they should most admire the art that gives them the least amount of pleasure.

PICASSO

All true geniuses make ugly art. To be a genius is to be at the forefront of technique, and no one who is at the forefront of technique can create pretty pictures. Other painters, who have skill but no genius, will take my work and imitate it in a way that makes it more pretty, makes it more popular. But I must make the ugly art that will make their art possible.

GERTRUDE

And yet I find your ugly art to be quite beautiful.

PICASSO

That is because you have the same skills, and the same curse, in your writing.

ALICE

I find Gertrude's writing quite beautiful.

PICASSO

It is quite beautiful. It is quite ugly, but quite beautiful. It has inspired me.

GERTRUDE

I know.

PICASSO

I have decided to give up painting and become a poet

GERTRUDE

I know.

PICASSO

You were there, Gertrude, when I did a reading. But you never commented.

GERTRUDE

Do not ask me to comment, Pablo.

PICASSO

Why not?

GERTRUDE

Do you remember when you told me you couldn't look at Jean Cocteau's drawings, that they were more offensive to look at than drawings that were simply bad drawings, that's the way it is with your poetry, it is more offensive than bad poetry, I don't know why it just is so, when someone who is a genius at one thing attempts to do something else which he cannot do so well it is particularly repellent.

PICASSO

But didn't you tell me that I am an extraordinary person, and that an extraordinary person can do anything?

GERTRUDE

Yes you are extraordinary but you don't read books you don't like words, words annoy you, you told me that, even extraordinary people are extraordinary within their limits, and when someone who is extraordinary does something that is perfectly ordinary than it is repellent, especially to a person who is extraordinary in that very thing.

(PICASSO runs to her.)

PICASSO

But painting depresses me and poetry makes me happy, what will I do?

(GERTRUDE hugs him.)

GERTRUDE

You will stop being despondent and you will go back to painting, go back to being a genius, that's what you'll do.

(Pause.)

HEMINGWAY

Every matador is a genius. Some, the best, are super-geniuses. The greatest of them are greater than any painter or writer, and you would know it if you saw such an artist in the ring with a bull worthy of his talents, a brave bull, as the Spanish say, a “noble” bull. Each bullfight is a story, it is comic and it is tragic and it ends in death. Even a poor bullfighter is telling a story worthy of a genius, a story of failure and cowardice and fear and suicide. What a matador understands more than any other writer is that any story, even a love story, especially a love story, is actually a story about death, maybe about those few minutes of glory that blaze before death, but about death nonetheless. And that knowledge leaves a mark on them. Nearly all bullfighters are brave, but all bullfighters are frightened, the best do not show their fright, but they are frightened nonetheless, for every day they stare into the inevitable and know that someday it will come, if not from a bull then from elsewhere. And in their art, they teach that to us. And that is why they are geniuses.

GERTRUDE

Scene Seven. A Farce about Matadors. All of us will be pretending to be the matadors.

Act 1, Scene 7: Matadors

(ALL run off stage and come back with capes. Chaos ensues as they begin charging each other,. ALICE and HEMINGWAY charge each other angrily. HEMINGWAY and GERTRUDE charge each other lustfully. PICASSO is perverse with all, finally finding himself locked in combat with HEMINGWAY. HEMINGWAY charges GERTRUDE and exits with PICASSO on his back. ALICE offers GERTRUDE her handkerchief. GERTRUDE offers ALICE the severed ear of a bull. They embrace.

GERTRUDE

Scene Eight. The Bride Prepares. Alice will be pretending to be the bride. I will be pretending to be her bridesmaids, her mother, her father, her sisters and nieces, her maid of honor.

Act 1, Scene 8: The Bride Prepares

ALICE

I am pretending to wear a wedding dress.

GERTRUDE (WEDDING PARTY)

It is a beautiful dress.

ALICE

I am pretending to have spent months picking it out.

GERTRUDE (WEDDING PARTY)

Is it a very expensive dress?

ALICE

Oh yes. Very expensive. Very, very expensive.

GERTRUDE (WEDDING PARTY)

But you always say, it is not worth spending money on clothes. You always say, I would rather pay for a new painting than a new dress.

ALICE

That is what Gertrude says.

GERTRUDE (WEDDING PARTY)

You always say, I would rather pay for a good meal than a new dress.

ALICE

Yes, I do say that. But this is my special day.

GERTRUDE (WEDDING PARTY)

We will have to fuss over you.

ALICE

Yes, fuss, fuss.

GERTRUDE (WEDDING PARTY)

Caesar.

ALICE

Don't call me that. Only Gertrude calls me that. And you are pretending to be my bridesmaid.

GERTRUDE (WEDDING PARTY)

And then a cow comes out.

ALICE

That is for after, that is for the wedding night.

GERTRUDE (WEDDING PARTY)

Has Gertrude seen the dress?

ALICE

Of course not, it's bad luck.

GERTRUDE (WEDDING PARTY)

I would not think you were so conventional.

ALICE

But we are very conventional, Gertrude and I. Very conventional. Old fashioned.

GERTRUDE (WEDDING PARTY)

But the way she writes—

ALICE

Yes, but this is different. This is not about the way she writes, it is about the way she feels.

GERTRUDE (WEDDING PARTY)

A traditional hubby. A traditional wifey.

ALICE

Yes.

GERTRUDE (WEDDING PARTY)

Are there frills?

ALICE

Just enough. Just enough to be special, not gaudy.

GERTRUDE (WEDDING PARTY)

Are you feeling happy?

ALICE

Very happy. Happy and excited.

GERTRUDE (WEDDING PARTY)

Are you feeling scared?

ALICE

A little scared. I do not like being the center of attention. That is for her.

GERTRUDE (WEDDING PARTY)

Are you feeling ready?

ALICE

I have felt ready since the day we first took a walk through the Luxembourg Gardens.

GERTRUDE

Good. Good then. It's time. Scene nine. The Marriage Ceremony. I will be pretending to be the groom. Alice will be pretending to be the bride. Picasso will be pretending to be Carl Van Vechten, who is always so kind, so very kind to us both. Sometimes we pretend Carl's name is Papa Woojums, and Alice's name is Mama Woojums and that my name is Baby Woojums. Carl will be pretending to be able to officiate.

Act 1, Scene 9: The Marriage Ceremony

(Wedding music plays. PICASSO and HEMINGWAY enter, with a chuppah, which they set up onstage. Or perhaps the chuppah has already been placed. GERTRUDE stands under chuppah, and ALICE processes to join her. PICASSO takes his place as the officiant.)

PICASSO (PAPA WOOJUMS)

Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today to pretend to join this woman, Gertrude Stein, and this woman, Alice Babette Toklas, in holy matrimony. Marriage is an institution that gives social and legal legitimacy to a profound personal connection, joining two people in a way that would be emotionally and logistically devastating to pull asunder. Therefore, it is not something that should be entered into lightly or unadvisedly. It is a lifetime commitment, not a mere epigram or couplet but a book of inordinate length, full of repetitions and digressions, that may occasionally in its latter half drift off into self indulgence, but is ultimately redeemed by the devotion and love it represents.

Through your marriage, you will be joined. It is a union of your hearts, your bodies, your finances, and possibly your personalities. In any historical accounting, your names will appear together. Any art created from this point forward will be analyzed at least partly in terms of your relationship with each other. And of course, one would expect your graves to eventually be placed in close proximity.

The chuppah that is over you symbolizes the home you will make, a home marked by your dedication to each other and the myriad of important artistic and historical figures you will host.

For this event, Hemingway is pretending to be your family and friends, gathered around you to witness this wedding. He symbolizes the love that they bear to you and simultaneously symbolizes the ambivalent relationship many of those friends have to the idea of two women marrying. I will forgo the ritual of asking whether there is anyone here who objects, as that would be belaboring the obvious.

Gertrude, Alice: the deepest part of our own relationship won't come until I accompany you in your travels through America, many years from now, but at that time I will be honored to be the only friend to be welcomed into your relationship almost as if I were a third partner. And I will find a strength and depth to your love that I have seen in few marriages. It is not an exaggeration to say that I see this as a marriage of your souls.

(PICASSO takes out two rings.)

These rings will be the symbols of your love. They go round and round, like a sentence that turns in upon itself in an endless loop of repetition. As you, Gertrude, place this ring on Alice's hand, say to her these words: I say it to you

GERTRUDE

I say it to you.

PICASSO (PAPA WOOJUMS)

And I say it to you.

GERTRUDE

And I say it to you.

PICASSO (PAPA WOOJUMS)

I say it to you.

GERTRUDE

I say it to you.

PICASSO (PAPA WOOJUMS)

How I love my little Jew.

GERTRUDE

How I love my little Jew.

PICASSO (PAPA WOOJUMS)

I say it to you.

GERTRUDE

I say it to you.

PICASSO (PAPA WOOJUMS)

And I say it to you.

GERTRUDE

And I say it to you.

PICASSO (PAPA WOOJUMS)

I say it to you.

GERTRUDE

I say it to you.

PICASSO (PAPA WOOJUMS)

And I say it to you.

GERTRUDE

And I say it to you.

PICASSO (PAPA WOOJUMS)

As you, Alice, place this ring on Gertrude's hand, say to her these words: I am my beloved's

ALICE

I am my beloved's

PICASSO (PAPA WOOJUMS)

My beloved is mine

ALICE

My beloved is mine.

PICASSO (PAPA WOOJUMS)

I am my beloved's

ALICE

I am my beloved's

PICASSO (PAPA WOOJUMS)

And my beloved is mine

ALICE

And my beloved is mine.

PICASSO (PAPA WOOJUMS)

Behold thou art fair

ALICE

Behold, thou art fair

PICASSO (PAPA WOOJUMS)

And as large as Mount Fattuski

ALICE

And as large as Mount Fattuski

PICASSO (PAPA WOOJUMS)

I am my beloved's

ALICE

I am my beloved's

PICASSO (PAPA WOOJUMS)

And my beloved is mine

ALICE

And my beloved is mine.

PICASSO (PAPA WOOJUMS)

Marriage is a marriage is a marriage is a marriage.

(PICASSO puts a wrapped glass on the ground.)

GERTRUDE

My missus. My missus who kisses us.

(GERTRUDE stomps on the glass. They kiss.
Music. Recessional. PICASSO and
HEMINGWAY exit.)

Scene Ten. The Wedding Night.

Act 1, Scene 10: The Wedding Night

(GERTRUDE disappears beneath ALICE'S dress.)

ALICE

Moo. Moooooooooooo.

(GERTRUDE reemerges.)

GERTRUDE

This ends Act One. Hemingway and Picasso will be passing out champagne as we set up for Act Two.

(HEMINGWAY and PICASSO pass around champagne.)

Act 2, Scene 1: A Funny Thing

(HEMINGWAY and PICASSO exits after drinks are served. GERTRUDE and ALICE are alone onstage. Now they are in darker clothes, more expensive looking clothes, maybe grays and blacks.)

GERTRUDE

Act 2. Scene 1. A Funny Thing. It's a funny thing when you are pretending to be Gertrude Stein in a play about a wedding and then Act One ends and the wedding has happened and there is a whole second act to go and so what will Act Two be about?

ALICE

Act Two can be about our wedding.

GERTRUDE

Yes but Act One was about our wedding and the wedding has already happened so how can Act Two be about our wedding?

ALICE

I like weddings, comedies all end in weddings and this is a comedy so it should end with a wedding.

GERTRUDE

But we already did that in Act One.

ALICE

We did it in Act One and it was a good act so we should do it again in Act Two.

GERTRUDE

Well if we do it again in Act Two, let's pretend that I am world famous and I have a lot of money.

ALICE

But you were world famous and had a lot of money in Act One.

GETRUDE

No, I was pretending to be world famous and have a lot of money in Act One. But now let's pretend that I am actually famous and actually have a lot of money.

ALICE

So in Act One you were pretending to be pretending?

GERTRUDE

Pretending is a funny thing. Sometimes if you pretend and pretend and pretend that you are something you become that thing because you pretended so long. But sometimes if you pretend and pretend and pretend you still have to pretend because you are not that thing.

ALICE

So if I pretend and pretend and pretend that I am Gertrude Stein, will I be Gertrude Stein?

GERTRUDE

I don't know. But I think that even if I pretend and pretend and pretend to be Alice Toklas, I will not be Alice Toklas.

ALICE

Is that because you are a genius and I am the wife of a genius and once you are a genius you cannot stop being a genius?

GERTRUDE

I don't know if that is the answer. But I will pretend that it is.

ALICE

Gertrude, what about the times you have to pretend that you are something you are not, that you are not married or not a Jew?

GERTRUDE

Those are in the bad times. Those are the times you need to pretend, just in order to survive. Sometimes there is war, and in times of war that's when you need to pretend most of all. But sometimes there is also peace, and when there is peace, it is sometimes better to pretend those bad times didn't happen. Because sometimes people don't like it when you pretend, because they think it is too easy to pretend.

ALICE

It is one thing to pretend because you want to pretend and another to pretend because you need to pretend.

GERTRUDE

And sometimes friends can help you pretend. If you help them in return.

ALICE

And sometimes those friends pretend to be something different, something worse, when they are not with you. Or maybe they are pretending when they are with you, it's difficult to say.

GERTRUDE

But here's a funny thing. When you pretend, even in war, especially in war, you start to notice there is not just war, there are other things, good things, funny things. And those are the things, those are the things I want to talk about now.

ALICE

Yes, I'm sorry Gertrude, this is not a good conversation, not a good conversation at all. Let's pretend we didn't have it. All that comes later anyway, maybe Act Three or Four or Six. Because Act Two is all about funny things, funny things like a wedding and fame and money.

GERTRUDE

Yes, let's spend Scene Two talking about money, I like to talk about money. You and I will continue to pretend to be Gertrude and Alice. Picasso will pretend to be Picasso once more.

Act 2, Scene 2: Money

(PICASSO enters. ALICE has a sewing basket, and is either knitting or doing needlepoint.)

PICASSO

It is only the poor who know anything about money. The rich know nothing about it, the more you have the less you know. The less you think about what you could do with it, if only you had it. When I had no money and was given a little it gave me so much pleasure, but the more money I have, the less I know about money. Those who were born rich must know nothing about it at all.

GERTRUDE

Yes, I have noticed this, rich relatives of mine know nothing of money. They do not pay the people they hire, because they do not think it is important to pay them. Eventually they pay them, or they do not, but it is not important to them. The rich think it is they who know about money, but it is the poor who really know about money.

PICASSO

I'd like to live like a poor man, but have a great deal of money. Then I would truly be happy.

GERTRUDE

I used to be quite fascinated with stories of how people earned their first dollar. I was particularly fascinated because I never had earned a first dollar. Once I had a tutor I was supposed to pay, and I told the tutor I could not, because I had no more money that month. And the tutor was quite surprised, he said, but you do not earn money, so of course you do have the money this month. And to me, I had thought it was all the same. Whether I earned an income or received it, it was all the same. And here's a funny thing. He was envious of me, but I was envious of him. Because when you earn income, and the world gets more expensive, sometimes your income can go up. But if you receive income, and things get more expensive, then you have to go to your capital, and if you go to your capital, you do not receive so much income anymore. And eventually you will have no income, none at all. And the world has become expensive, much more expensive. So I am certainly glad that Alice and I are earning income, at last.

PICASSO

Is Alice earning income?

GERTRUDE

Of course. The income is coming from her autobiography.

PICASSO

But it was you who *wrote* the autobiography.

GERTRUDE

Writing an autobiography is not difficult, not difficult at all. It is living that is difficult.

ALICE

I did not think it would earn any money. I thought to earn money, you had to write something sentimental.

PICASSO

Then I suppose you were wrong.

ALICE

Yes. I suppose it was sentimental after all.

GERTRUDE

It's a funny thing about money. If you have earned money it is not the same thing as if you had not earned money. Because now that I earn money I feel I have a value, because people are willing to pay.

ALICE

But you always knew you had a value.

GERTRUDE

Yes, but then I felt I had a value because people were not willing to pay. And that was my value, and that was my identity. When the public knows you and does not want to pay for you and when the public knows you and does want to pay for you, you are not the same you.

ALICE

If you are not the same you than I am not the same I. But we are the same we to our little dog Basket, he does not know or care whether we earn money or not.

(ALICE pulls out a tail of cloth and a ball of yarn for a head from her basket. It is now their dog. She pets it.)

PICASSO

I have a dog named Lump. He is my favorite dog. Lump looks like a sausage, he is one of those sorts of dogs. And I love Lump because he is so loyal and looks so funny and he does not care if I have money or am famous he just cares if I pet him and feed him, I could be poor and untalented and he wouldn't care. Which is why I paint his portrait all the time and now Lump is famous and makes money himself. But that is not why I love him.

GERTRUDE

You are you because your little dog loves you. And he is he because you love him. I used to tell everyone who became successful how bad it was for them, and now when I am old I am successful and it is a funny thing.

ALICE

But it is a great pleasure earning money.

GERTRUDE

Oh yes, a great pleasure. And it is a great pleasure spending money. And it a great pleasure to have other people tell you that you are a genius, so that you no longer have to tell them.

ALICE

There is no pleasure that compares to it.

PICASSO

When I was young and you and Leo found me and paid me for my work and called me a genius, yes there was great pleasure in that. But fame, no there I find no pleasure, no pleasure at all. It is the castigation of the artist. With fame comes incomprehension. What does it matter how much they adore you, if they care more about you than about your art?

GERTRUDE

I do not care which they care about, as long as they care about something.

Act 2, Scene 3: Hemingway Crashes the Party

(HEMINGWAY enters. He is very drunk.)

ALICE

Is that Hemingway, or is that Hemingway pretending to be someone else?

GERTRUDE

No Hemingway is pretending to be drunk Hemingway. We have come to Scene Three, Hemingway Crashes the Party.

HEMINGWAY

When I was young and had no money and had no fame I had almost no fear of death. I was courageous in the way that only someone with no money or reputation can be courageous. But now I have some money and I have some fame and so I fear it. Hello, Picasso, I'd like to buy one of your paintings. I don't like it but I'll pay for it, it will keep me honest and poor enough to not fear death quite so much.

PICASSO

I do not discuss art sales with the drunk and boorish.

(PICASSO exits.)

HEMINGWAY

Times must have changed. When I was last here everyone was a little drunk and a little boorish.

ALICE

Hemingway, we did not invite you to our wedding.

HEMINGWAY

Aren't you already married?

ALICE

We are getting married again.

HEMINGWAY

No, you think you are getting married again, because you are rich now, rich and successful, and so you are afraid. You are pretending this play is a comedy when it is not a comedy, when no life is a comedy, every life is a tragedy and you know it.

ALICE

Of course it is a comedy. We wanted to be rich and successful and get married and have Gertrude be recognized as a genius and that's all true, that's all true now.

HEMINGWAY

Which is why you are no longer fearless. If you were a matador you would know why you were so afraid, you would still be afraid, but you would know why. I once wrote a story and I decided that the one thing that I would not say in that story was that at the end, in the white space after the final period, a man commits suicide. And that suicide isn't mentioned in the story, not mentioned once, but it is there, and that secret is what makes it a story.

GERTRUDE

Everything for you is death and suicide. When you pretend to kill yourself, it will not be a secret that is revealed, it will be the same truth we've always known.

HEMINGWAY

Nobody pretends with suicide. You either do it or you don't, you succeed or you fail. Sometimes you do not intend to succeed, but it doesn't matter, once you try, it is no longer pretending.

GERTRUDE

Your secret is that you are a sensitive boy, and that is what is interesting about you, not all that death. I am sorry for the death. But it is not what is interesting. What is interesting is who you are when you aren't pretending.

HEMINGWAY

Who are you when you are not pretending?

GERTRUDE

I am I.

HEMINGWAY

Is that the same I you were when I first met you, or a different I?

GERTRUDE

I am I because my little dog loves me.

HEMINGWAY

That's a lot of responsibility to give to one little dog.

ALICE

You only say that because you are terrified of love. All you know is tortured love and unadulterated lust.

HEMINGWAY

Too much love is like too much money, it all makes the end so much harder. Because in the end one of you will die, and what's worse than that is that one of you will live. There is no lonelier creature than a person who has lived many years with a good wife and then outlived her. If two people love each other there can be no happy end to it.

ALICE

When you are in love every day, every day is a day when you're gay. And yes one of you will die and yes one of you will live but even then, even then the days can be gay if you remember and can pretend and remember and can pretend.

(ALICE gives one last pat to her "dog", then puts away yarn and cloth and it is a basket again.)

I had a funny dream the other night that I was in heaven, or maybe Gertrude was in heaven, one of us had died and was in heaven and the other one was visiting. And Gertrude was in one room with Abraham and Moses and Solomon and I was the in the other room entertaining the women as usual. And in walked the Virgin Mary. And I said what a surprise, what a surprise, I never expected to meet you here, and the Virgin Mary said, don't worry, I will keep you company while Gertrude is in the other room, and I said how kind, how very kind of you, and I asked if she knew any good recipes and she said yes she knew a few, she had one with tomato juice and hot sauce and I wrote it down to put in my cookbook, and then suddenly I became quite worried and said, well, if you are here, all that I have heard about Jesus must be true, and she said yes, it is true, you knew it was true which is why you are here with me, and I said what about Gertrude, Gertrude doesn't know, and the Virgin Mary said don't worry, she's a genius, all the geniuses are up here in heaven too, they are saved because they are geniuses you see, and I said yes, I see, I understand, and I felt so comforted, and then the visit was over, I was waking up, but I kept thinking about her, kept thinking about the Virgin Mary, and I thought yes, she was a very nice companion, I liked being with her, I could spend more time with her, yes, and then I opened my eyes and told Gertrude about my funny dream and she kissed me and called me her little Jew.

GERTRUDE

Scene Four. The Arrival of the Guests, Once More The Arrival of the Guests.

Act 2, Scene 4: The Arrival of the Guests, Once More the Arrival of the Guest

HEMINGWAY (LEO)

I will be pretending to be Leo.

GERTRUDE

No this time Leo isn't here, he really isn't here, he isn't here at all.

HEMINGWAY (LEO)

Very well, I will be pretending to be not here at all, to just be a ghost outside your window, nothing more, nothing more.

GERTRUDE

It's Leo.

ALICE

You can't talk to Leo, you can't you know, you can't.

GERTRUDE

I know.

ALICE

He isn't even here, you know.

GERTRUDE

I know.

(GERTRUDE steps forward. HEMINGWAY steps forward. Facing forward, GERTRUDE gives a slow, stately bow. HEMINGWAY stands still a moment, then exits. PICASSO enters.)

ALICE

Oh look, it's Picasso pretending to be Papa Woojums again!

GERTRUDE

Oh Papa, here I am, your Baby Woojums!

ALICE

And here I am, Mama Woojums.

GERTRUDE

United again, it's the whole Woojums family. Tell me, Papa, tell me about all the books they are publishing in America, about all my books and how they are finally, finally publishing them all, every last one of them.

PICASSO (PAPA WOOJUMS)

Yes, Baby, it's true, they are publishing them, every last one of them.

ALICE

It's so kind of you, Papa, so very very kind, to oversee all that, to make sure that all of Baby's books are seen in print.

PICASSO (PAPA WOOJUMS)

Of course, Mama, you and I, we look out for our Baby Woojums, don't we.

ALICE

We do, Papa, we do.

GERTRUDE

And now Picasso is pretending to be Thornton Wilder.

PICASSO (WILDER)

So good to see you Gertrude, so good to see you Alice, well well, in Paris at last, don't like it, don't like it at all, but like you, love to see you.

GERTRUDE

Yes and now here is Picabia, I mean Picasso pretending to be Picabia, oh Francis, I don't know what it is, you are the only new artist who interests me now, there used to be so many, but now there is you, just you.

PICASSO (PICABIA)

Yes, isn't it funny how so many people confuse me with Picasso, when truly we are not alike, not alike at all. And how so many people think that I am Spanish when he is Spanish, or that he is French when I am French, or that I am a genius when he is a genius.

GERTRUDE

Yes, but still everyone would say, even Picasso would say, that some of your paintings are very fine, very fine indeed.

PICASSO (PICABIA)

Yes, he would admit that, I do suppose he would admit that.

ALICE

And now look who is here, it is all the saints, all the Catholic saints!

GERTURDE

Don't be silly Alice, it is not the saints, it is just Virgil, just Picasso pretending to be Virgil Thompson, you got confused because of our opera about the saints, but it is just Virgil.

ALICE

I thought you were not speaking to Virgil.

GERTRUDE

I was not speaking to him but now I am speaking to him again.

PICASSO (VIRGIL)

Gertrude has as many people that she isn't speaking to as those that she is speaking to. More, perhaps. For a time she wasn't even speaking to Picasso.

GERTRUDE

Yes, I remember, though I don't remember why and I'm sure Picasso doesn't remember why.

PICASSO (VIRGIL)

I think perhaps he does.

GERTRUDE

Oh no, I am sure he does not. And somewhere elsewhere Hemingway is pretending to be all those people I am not speaking to, including himself, including Leo, including Mabel and Bravig and Matisse and so many people who I can't even think of at the moment.

PICASSO (VIRGIL)

Perhaps it is because you are a Jew. Jews are always breaking up with their friends while Christians make up from their quarrels. That is because Jews do not have to worry about forgiveness and they do not have to worry about the afterlife but Christians have to forgive all the time and they always worry about what will happen in the afterlife. You see, we Christians must spend eternity together, so it is best if we make amends now.

GERTRUDE

Perhaps so Virgil, perhaps you are right. When a Jew dies he is dead, after all.

ALICE

Oh no, oh no, that is not correct, Gertrude will be going to the afterlife, because she is a genius you see. That is why Abraham and Moses and Solomon were there, because they are geniuses too, even if they were Jews, they were geniuses too.

GERTRUDE

And here at last is Picasso pretending to be Picasso. He has brought all his wives and all his mistresses, all of them. Just from them alone the apartment is full!

ALICE

Picasso, last time you brought one wife and two mistresses. That was bad enough. Why did you bring all your wives and all your mistresses this time?

PICASSO

Why? Because Gertrude told me, this is a farce.

Act 2, Scene 5: A Farce

GERTRUDE

Scene five. A Farce. Picasso and all his wives and all his mistresses are found in suggestive, compromising positions. Alice will be pretending to be the wives and mistresses. I will be pretending to disapprove.

(PICASSO and ALICE race around the stage, in and out of doors, and occasionally take a suggestive pose, at which point they exclaim:)

ALICE (WIVES AND MISTRESSES)

Pablo, how could you?

PICASSO

But my dear, you misunderstand.

(This process is repeated. At least two more times, maybe five more time. Maybe more. As many times as seems appropriate and continues to amuse. During the course of the events, ALICE has her clothes torn off, leaving her in just a slip. Finally, the game is over.)

ALICE (WIVES AND MISTRESSES)

Pablo, how could you?

PICASSO

But my dear, you misunderstand.

GERTRUDE

Picasso! Don't you think we've all grown a bit old for all this?

PICASSO

Youth has no age. I am the age I am now, and I cannot say whether it is old or young. I act as I act, and I shall continue to act that way, until I can act no longer. When a genius dies, it is a shipwreck, and as when a huge ship sinks, so much gets sucked down with it.

GERTRUDE

I do not want my death to be a shipwreck. You have so many wives and mistresses, Pablo, what a disaster your death will be. Bodies everywhere, flailing, trying desperately to stay above the waves. But my death...I only have one passenger. She is only one. And I do care for her, I care for her so very much.

PICASSO

You cannot help it, Gertrude. When a genius dies, it is a shipwreck.

(PICASSO exits.)

Act 2, Scene 6: Gertrude Stein Makes a Speech

GERTRUDE

It is time for me to make a speech. I do not like making a speech, but since scene six is entitled Gertrude Stein Makes a Speech, I suppose I will have to. My life has been a composition. Everyone's life is a composition. When I wrote *The Making of Americans*, I wrote it in the continuous present. A continuous present is the continuous present. We are always the age we are now, and we act as we act until we can act no longer. Often, we are beginning, and often, we are beginning again. Beginning again and a continuous present are two different things. In a composition we use everything. We use a continuous present, we begin again, we make lists, we use romanticism, we use equilibration and distribution. The equilibration and distribution happen after, it happens towards the end, or maybe after the end, how does one reach equilibration and distribution, it is troubling. It is troubling. The time of the composition is the time of the composition. It has been at times a present thing it has been at times a past thing it has been at times a future thing it has been at times an endeavor at parts or all of those things. The composition is very troublesome. Everything in the end must be equilibrated and distributed. The time-sense is troubling that is the reason why at present the time-sense is the composition is the composition that is making what there is in composition. And afterwards. Now that is all. What is the answer?

(Pause.)

Very well then, what is the question?

(GERTRUDE STEIN exits.)

ALICE

Gertrude? That was—I didn't know you were going to exit that way. Lovey? Fattuski?

(Pause.)

It seems perhaps that Hemingway was right. It seems perhaps that this act wasn't about a wedding at all. A funny thing. A funny thing when you think that you are doing a scene about a wedding and it turns out that it is not a wedding, not a wedding at all.

(PICASSO and HEMINGWAY enter and slowly begin removing the paintings.)

Getrude Stein is not here but Gertrude Stein is here because often, often I am pretending I am Gertrude Stein. And Gertrude Stein is now famous and earns money, what a great pleasure it is to earn money, to earn money the way I do when I am pretending to be Gertrude Stein. Once, we turned a painting into food. It was during the war, and there was no food, but there was a Cezanne, we had a Cezanne, and we needed to eat, so we turned it into food. And I can turn other paintings into food but that is a hard thing to do while I am pretending to be Gertrude Stein. When we came back from the countryside, after the war, we were afraid there would be no more paintings. The Nazis had come to the apartment and they had taken our silverware and our knickknacks and even the little footstool with the needlepoint I had done, the one that Picasso had drawn the pattern for. But the paintings were still there. They hadn't taken the paintings. And Gertrude said, at least they have not taken anything of any importance. And I was silent because the silverware and the knickknacks and that little footstool were important, they were important to me. But I was silent because we had the paintings. And one day I came home from vacation and the paintings were gone. They were all gone. And where had they gone and the Steins had taken it. Gertrude's relatives had taken it. And there were no more paintings. Which made it hard when there was no more food, which made it hard, very hard. And I lost my hearing and I lost my sight and there were no paintings to turn into medicine either, just the charity a few old friends. But how could the paintings be gone when my wife Gertrude had bought them all and she had wanted me to have them all. And it was because she wasn't my wife, she was just pretending to be my wife, you see.

(The paintings are all gone, except the one that is the painting of GERTRUDE by Picasso. If it is an empty frame, now that image appears.)

I am I because Gertrude Stein loves me. And we will meet in Heaven because now I am a Christian and she is a genius so we will meet in Heaven. And the Virgin Mary will preside over our wedding. I am I because Gertrude loves me. I am I because Gertrude loves me. I am I because Gertrude loves me.

(GERTRUDE STEIN enters.)

GERTRUDE

I am I because Alice loves me.

ALICE

I am I because Gertrude loves me.

GERTRUDE

I am I because Alice loves me. The other day, Gertrude Stein said to Solomon and to Moses and to Abraham, I don't think Alice is ever going to write a play about our marriage. But it is just the sort of thing that will make money, because it is so sentimental. And she said you know what I am going to do? I am going to write it for her. I am going to write it as simply as Moses wrote the Torah. And she has and this is it.

(BLACKOUT)