

GERTRUDE STEIN

WHAT HAPPENED

/

LADIES VOICES

/

COUNTING HER

DRESSES

/

I LIKE IT TO BE A PLAY

Foreword

Ladies'Voices and *What Happened* were both printed originally in *Geography and Plays*. Miss Stein finds a definite connection between geography, landscape and playwriting and refers to this connection again and again in her work. For instance, in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* she says: 'A landscape is such a natural arrangement for a battlefield or a play that one must write plays.' In *Lectures in America*, Miss Stein explains: 'And so all of a sudden I began to write plays. I remember very well the first one I wrote. I called it, *What Happened, A Play*, it is in *Geography and Plays* as are all the plays I wrote at that time. I think and always have thought that if you write a play you ought to announce that it is a play and that is what I did. *What Happened, A Play*. I had just come home from a pleasant dinner party (elsewhere she tells us this dinner was given by Harry and Bridget Gibb) and I realized then as anybody can know that something is always happening. Something is always happening, anybody knows a quantity of stories of people's lives that are always happening, there are always plenty for the newspapers and there are always plenty in private life. Everybody knows so many stories, and what is the use of telling another story. What is the use of telling a story since there are so many and everybody knows so many and tells so many. In the country it is perfectly extraordinary how many complicated dramas go on all the time. And everybody knows them, so why tell another one. There is always a story going on. So naturally

what I wanted to do in my play was what everybody did not always know or always tell. By everybody I do of course include myself but always I do of course include myself. And so I wrote, *What Happened, A Play*. Then I wrote *Ladies' Voices*. The idea in *What Happened, A Play* was without telling what happened, to make a play the essence of what happened.'

Carl van Vechten,

Parijs 1922

WHAT HAPPENED

/

LADIES VOICES

/

COUNTING HER
DRESSES

/

I LIKE IT TO BE A PLAY

act one

(One.)

Loud and no cataract. Not any nuisance is depressing.

(Five.)

A single sum four and five together and one, not any sun a clear signal and an exchange.

Silence is in blessing and chasing and coincidences being ripe. A simple melancholy clearly precious and on the surface and surrounded and mixed strangely. A vegetable window and clearly most clearly an exchange in parts and complete.

A tiger a rapt and surrounded overcoat securely arranged with spots old enough to be thought useful and witty quite witty in a secret and in a blinding flurry.

Length what is length when silence is so windowful. What is the use of a sore if there is no joint and no toady and no tag and not even an eraser. What is the commonest exchange between more laughing and most. Carelessness is carelessness and a cake well a cake is a powder, it is very likely to be powder, it is very likely to be much worse.

A shutter and only shutter and Christmas, quite Christmas, an only shutter and a target a whole color in every center and shooting real shooting and what can hear, that can hear that which makes such an establishment provided with what is provisionary.

(Two.)

Urgent action is not in graciousness it is not in clocks it is not in water wheels. It is the same so essentially, it is a worry a real worry.

A silence a whole waste of a desert spoon, a whole waste of any little shaving, a whole waste altogether open.

(Two.)

Paralysis why is paralysis a syllable why is it not more lively.

A special sense a very special sense is ludicrous.

(Three.)

Suggesting a sage brush with a turkey and also something abominable is not the only pain there is in so much provoking. There is even more. To begin a lecture is a strange way of taking dirty apple blossoms and is there more use in water, certainly there is if there is going to be fishing, enough water would make desert and even prunes, it would make nothing throw any shade

because after all is there not more practical humor in a series of photographs
and also in a treacherous sculpture.

Any hurry any little hurry has so much subsistence, it has and choosing, it has.

act two

(Three.)

Four and nobody wounded, five and nobody flourishing, six and nobody talkative, eight and nobody sensible.

One and a left hand lift that is so heavy that there is no way of pronouncing perfectly.

A point of accuracy, a point of a strange stove, a point that is so sober that the reason left is all the chance of swelling.

(The same three.)

A wide oak a wide enough oak, a very wide cake, a lightning cooky, a single wide open and exchanged box filled with the same little sac that shines.

The best the only better and more left footed stranger.

The very kindness there is in all lemons oranges apples pears and potatoes.

(The same three.)

A same frame a sadder portal, a singular gate and a bracketed mischance.

A rich market where there is no memory of more moon than there is everywhere and yet where strangely there is apparel and a whole set.

A connection, a clam cup connection, a survey, a ticket and a return to laying over.

act three

(Two.)

A cut, a cut is not a slice, what is the occasion for representing a cut and a slice. What is the occasion for all that.

A cut is a slice, a cut is the same slice. The reason that a cut is a slice is that if there is no hurry any time is just as useful.

(Four.)

A cut and a slice is there any question when a cut and a slice are just the same.

A cut and a slice has no particular exchange it has such a strange exception to all that which is different.

A cut and only slice, only a cut and only a slice, the remains of a taste may remain and tasting is accurate.

A cut and an occasion, a slice and a substitute a single hurry and a circumstance that shows that, all this is so reasonable when every thing is clear.

(One.)

All alone with the best reception, all alone with more than the best reception,
all alone with a paragraph and something that is worth something, worth
almost anything, worth the best example there is of a little occasional
archbishop. This which is so clean is precious little when there is no bath
water. A long time a very long time there is no use in an obstacle that is
original and has a source.

act four

(Four and four more.)

A birthday, what is a birthday, a birthday is a speech, it is a second time when there is tobacco, it is only one time when there is poison. It is more than one time when the occasion which shows an occasional sharp separation is unanimous.

A blanket, what is a blanket, a blanket is so speedy that heat much heat is hotter and cooler, very much cooler almost more nearly cooler than at any other time often.

A blame what is a blame, a blame is what arises and cautions each one to be calm and an ocean and a masterpiece.

A clever saucer, what is a clever saucer, a clever saucer is very likely practiced and even has toes, it has tiny things to shake and really if it were not for a delicate blue color would there be any reason for every one to differ.

The objection and the perfect central table, the sorrow in borrowing and the hurry in a nervous feeling, the question is it really a plague, is it really an oleander, is it really saffron in color, the surmountable appetite which shows inclination to be warmer, the safety in a match and the safety in a little piece of splinter, the real reason why cocoa is cheaper, the same use for bread as for any breathing that is softer, the lecture and the surrounding large white soft unequal and spread out sale of more and still less is no better, all this makes

one regard in a season, one hat in a curtain that in rising higher, one landing
and many many more, and many more many more many many more.

act five

(Two.)

A regret a single regret makes a door way. What is a door way, a door way is a photograph.

What is a photograph a photograph is a sight and a sight is always a sight of something. Very likely there is a photograph that gives color if there is then there is that color that does not change any more than it did when there was much more use for photography.

WHAT HAPPENED

/

LADIES VOICES

/

COUNTING HER

DRESSES

/

I LIKE IT TO BE A PLAY

curtain raiser

Ladies' voices give pleasure.

The acting two is easily lead. Leading is not in winter. Here the winter is sunny.

Does that surprise you.

Ladies voices together and then she came in.

Very well good night.

Very well good night.

(Mrs. Cardillac.)

That's silver.

You mean the sound.

Yes the sound.

act 2.

Honest to God Miss Williams I don't mean to say that I was older.

But you were.

Yes I was. I do not excuse myself. I feel that there is no reason for passing an archduke.

You like the word.

You know very well that they all call it their house.

As Christ was to Lazarus so was the founder of the hill to Mahon.

You really mean it.

I do.

act 3.

Yes Genevieve does not know it. What. That we are seeing Caesar.

Caesar kisses.

Kisses today.

Caesar kisses every day.

Genevieve does not know that it is only in this country that she could speak as she does.

She does speak very well doesn't she. She told them that there was not the slightest intention on the part of her countrymen to eat the fish that was not caught in their country.

In this she was mistaken.

act iv.

What are ladies voices.

Do you mean to believe me.

Have you caught the sun.

Dear me have you caught the sun.

scene 2.

Did you say they were different. I said it made no difference.

Where does it. Yes.

Mr. Richard Sutherland. This is a name I know.

Yes.

The Hotel Victoria.

Many words spoken to me have seemed English.

Yes we do hear one another and yet what are called voices the best decision in
telling of balls.

Masked balls.

Yes masked balls.

Poor Augustine.

WHAT HAPPENED

/

LADIES VOICES

/

**COUNTING HER
DRESSES**

/

I LIKE IT TO BE A PLAY

COUNTING HER DRESSES
A PLAY

Part I.

ACT I.

When they did not see me.

I saw them again.

I did not like it.

ACT II.

I count her dresses again.

ACT III.

Can you draw a dress.

ACT IV.

In a minute.

Part II.

ACT I.

Believe in your mistake.

ACT II.

Act quickly.

ACT III.

Do not mind the tooth.

ACT IV.

Do not be careless.

Part III.

ACT I.

I am careful.

ACT II.

Yes you are.

ACT III.

And obedient.

ACT IV.

Yes you are.

ACT V.

And industrious.

ACT VI.

Certainly.

Part IV.

ACT I.

Come to sing and sit.

ACT II.

Repeat it.

ACT III.

I repeat it.

Part V.

ACT I.

Can you speak quickly.

ACT II.

Can you cough.

ACT III.

Remember me to him.

ACT IV.

Remember that I want a cloak.

Part VI.

ACT I.

I know what I want to say. How do you do I forgive you everything and there is nothing to forgive.

Part VII.

ACT I.

The dog. You mean pale.

ACT II.

No we want dark brown.

ACT III.

I am tired of blue.

Part VIII.

ACT I.

Shall I wear my blue.

ACT II.

Do.

Part IX.

ACT I.

Thank you for the cow.

Thank you for the cow.

ACT II.

Thank you very much.

Part X.

ACT I.

Collecting her dresses.

ACT II.

Shall you be annoyed.

ACT III.

Not at all.

Part XI.

ACT I.

Can you be thankful.

ACT II.

For what.

ACT III.

For me.

Part XII.

ACT I.

I do not like this table.

ACT II.

I can understand that.

ACT III.

A feather.

ACT IV.

It weighs more than a feather.

Part XIII.

ACT I.

It is not tiring to count dresses.

Part XIV.

ACT I.

What is your belief.

Part XV.

ACT I.

In exchange for a table.

ACT II.

In exchange for or on a table.

ACT III.

We were satisfied.

Part XVI.

ACT I.

Can you say you like negro sculpture.

Part XVII.

ACT I.

The meaning of windows is air.

ACT II.

And a door.

ACT III.

A door should be closed.

Part XVIII.

ACT I.

Can you manage it.

ACT II.

You mean dresses.

ACT III.

Do I mean dresses.

Part XIX.

ACT I.

I mean one two three.

Part XX.

ACT I.

Can you spell quickly.

ACT II.

I can spell very quickly.

ACT III.

So can my sister-in-law.

ACT IV.

Can she.

Part XXI.

ACT I.

Have you any way of sitting.

ACT II.

You mean comfortably.

ACT III.

Naturally.

ACT IV.

I understand you.

Part XXII.

ACT I.

Are you afraid.

ACT II.

I am not any more afraid of water than they are.

ACT III.

Do not be insolent.

Part XXIII.

ACT I.

We need clothes.

ACT II.

And wool.

ACT III.

And gloves.

ACT IV.

And waterproofs.

Part XXIV.

ACT I.

Can you laugh at me.

ACT II.

And then say.

ACT III.

Married.

ACT IV.

Yes.

Part XXV.

ACT I.

Do you remember how he looked at clothes.

ACT II.

Do you remember what he said about wishing.

ACT III.

Do you remember all about it.

Part XXVI.

ACT I.

Oh yes.

ACT II.

You are stimulated.

ACT III.

And amused.

ACT IV.

We are.

Part XXVII.

ACT I.

What can I say that I am fond of.

ACT II.

I can see plenty of instances.

ACT III.

Can you.

Part XXVIII.

ACT I.

For that we will make an arrangement.

ACT II.

You mean some drawings.

ACT III.

Do I talk of art.

ACT IV.

All numbers are beautiful to me.

Part XXIX.

ACT I.

Of course they are.

ACT II.

Thursday.

ACT III.

We hope for Thursday.

ACT IV.

So do we.

Part XXX.

ACT I.

Was she angry.

ACT II.

Whom do you mean was she angry.

ACT III.

Was she angry with you.

Part XXXI.

ACT I.

Reflect more.

ACT II.

I do want a garden.

ACT III.

Do you.

ACT IV.

And clothes.

ACT V.

I do not mention clothes.

ACT VI.

No you didn't but I do.

ACT VII.

Yes I know that.

Part XXXII.

ACT I.

He is tiring.

ACT II.

He is not tiring.

ACT III.

No indeed.

ACT IV.

I can count them.

ACT V.

You do not misunderstand me.

ACT VI.

I misunderstand no one.

Part XXXIII.

ACT I.

Can you explain my wishes.

ACT II.

In the morning.

ACT III.

To me.

ACT IV.

Yes in there.

ACT V.

Then you do not explain.

ACT VI.

I do not press for an answer.

Part XXXIV.

ACT I.

Can you expect her today.

ACT II.

We saw a dress.

ACT III.

We saw a man.

ACT IV.

Sarcasm.

Part XXXV.

ACT I.

We can be proud of tomorrow.

ACT II.

And the vests.

ACT III.

And the doors.

ACT IV.

I always remember the roads.

Part XXXVI.

ACT I.

Can you speak English.

ACT II.

In London.

ACT III.

And here.

ACT IV.

With me.

Part XXXVII.

ACT I.

Count her dresses.

ACT II.

Collect her dresses.

ACT III.

Clean her dresses.

ACT IV.

Have the system.

Part XXXVIII.

ACT I.

She polished the table.

ACT II.

Count her dresses again.

ACT III.

When can you come.

ACT IV.

When can you come.

Part XXXIX.

ACT I.

Breathe for me.

ACT II.

I can say that.

ACT III.

It isn't funny.

ACT IV.

In the meantime.

Part XL.

ACT I.

Can you say.

ACT II.

What.

ACT III.

We have been told.

ACT IV.

Oh read that.

Part XLI.

ACT I.

I do not understand this home-coming.

ACT II.

In the evening.

ACT III.

Naturally.

ACT IV.

We have decided.

ACT V.

Indeed.

ACT VI.

If you wish.

WHAT HAPPENED
/
LADIES VOICES
/
COUNTING HER
DRESSES
/
I LIKE IT TO BE A PLAY

I liked it to be a play and so cleverly spoken.

Americans are very clever.

So are others.

Yes indeed.

And all men are brave.

scene I.

Satisfy.

I like to satisfy them.

He likes purses.

You mean silver purses.

Yes gold purses.

Here they have other purses.

All of them are carried in a procession.

Every day.

Not all day.

The martyrs and red carnations.

You mean red geraniums.

No I mean red pinks.

Purses have that word.

Please me.

To please me.

Called me.

She expected a distress.

Daughters.

Or daughters.

The youngest as children

One's said.

Verdun.

We close.

Here.

Stables or motors.

Stables altogether.

Did we know anything about houses in Mallorca.

scene 2.

So you were pleased with me.

scene 3.

Able men. What do you intend to do today.

I have planned to telegraph for an answer.

Oh yes.

What have you said to them.

I said I was delighted with the photographs.

scene 4.

Will you be sorry to leave Mallorca.

You mean the island.

The sun.

Or the people.

A great many people dislike the people.

scene 5.

Fifth Avenue in Spanish.

Fifth Avenue in Spanish.

Did you say water.

War water.

I have heard it said that a great many people expected another.

One another.

To be one another.

To be fought.

Do not say bright.

It is not a bright day.

scene 6.

Have we gone so far indeed have we gone so far.

scene 7.

Don't make a mistake and lose any leaves.

Classes.

Memory classes.

Don't go so far and lose any leaves.

We were really pleased with the leaves. We were really not pleased with the leaves.

I was very pleased with the leaves.

scene 8.

You were astonished by me.

All of us complain.

You were astonished by me.

Don't you understand trying.

Don't you understand trying to stammer.

No indeed I do not.

scene 9.

Were you surprised to see that we were so far long. You mean in stages. No of course not in selections. What have you selected. Very good sponges. But they are expensive. They are not necessarily cheap. We feel that they ask an extraordinary price here. You have every reason to suppose so. We were quite sure of it. It is easily understood they are accustomed to trading. You mean barter. No I don't mean that I mean metal worker. Metal workers have new clothes. In Palma. Yes in Palma.

I did not mean to mention that name.

Why do you dislike the town. Not at all.

The rest of the day was spent in visiting.

scene 10.

The end of that little plate.

You mean you didn't like the pottery. The brown one you mean. No the yellow.

Yes I liked it very much at first. It was too big. This is not the way to say that you will come again. But we don't want it.

scene 11.

What did she say. She said that she could read Spanish because all the words that were real words resemble french.

I don't mean to say that I am vexed.

Oh no indeed you are not to be blamed.

Not at all.

We are very careful to move together. For pleasure. For our pleasure. Oh yes indeed. We need you. More than ever. I am glad we are not cold. Not here.

Believe me. Believe in me. I do.

De teksten zijn in de nieuwe vertaling gelezen door de Theatertroep op 5 februari 2015 in Perdu te Amsterdam

www.perdu.nl

www.theatertroep.nl

De groene kamer.

De groene kamer is een programmareeks van Perdu waarin dichters/vertalers worden uitgenodigd om toneelwerk te vertalen. Voor de eerste drie

afleveringen zijn dit Anneke Brassinga, Erik Bindervoet en Han van der Vegt.

De vertalingen worden aan het publiek gepresenteerd in de vorm van een eerste lezing door de Barbaren & co en een onderzoek naar de theatrale mogelijkheden van de tekst door de Theatertroep.

De groene kamer verwijst naar de toneeltraditie van de Green Room: een ruimte achter of naast het toneel waar tijdens de voorstellingen ontmoetingen plaatsvonden tussen de toneelspelers en een aantal gefortuneerde toeschouwers.

Deze vertaling kwam tot stand dankzij een bijdrage van het Lira Fonds

Gertrude Stein (1874-1946) was een Amerikaanse dichter, prozaïst, toneelschrijver en kunstverzamelaar. Zij speelde een centrale rol in de Parijse avant-garde en behoort tot de modernistische schrijvers. Opgegroeid in de Verenigde Staten, verhuisde Stein in 1903 naar Parijs. Aldaar groeide haar woning op de beroemde rue de Fleurus uit tot een kunstzinnige literaire salon die een zeer grote rol zou gaan spelen voor ontwikkelingen in de Parijse moderne kunst en literatuur. Haar leven lang bracht Stein kunstenaars en schrijvers bij elkaar, zoals Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Ernest Hemingway en Ezra Pound. Tijdens het interbellum was zij degene die de term Lost Generation opwierp voor de groep Amerikaanse schrijvers die na de Eerste Wereldoorlog naar Parijs waren getrokken, onder wie John Steinbeck, F. Scott Fitzgerald en Sherwood Anderson. Haar literatuur wordt beschouwd als zeer vernieuwend en experimenteel. Beroemd is het citaat uit het gedicht 'Sacred Emily' (1913): 'Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose'.

Anneke Brassinga, geboren 1948 te Schaarsbergen, opgeleid tot literair vertaler aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam, 1967-1972, sindsdien werkzaam als vertaler van onder meer Samuel Beckett, Denis Diderot, Hermann Broch, Herman Melville, Sylvia Plath, Vladimir Nabokov en Oscar Wilde. Sinds 1989 publiceerde zij tien dichtbundels en vier prozaboeken van voornamelijk essayistische aard. Onlangs werd ze voor haar poëzie onderscheiden met de P.C. Hooft-prijs. Haar werk wordt uitgegeven door De Bezige Bij te Amsterdam.