



Gertrude Stein on NBC radio with interviewer [William Lundell], 1932

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ADAM FRANK / Scenario for Gertrude Stein's "For the Country Entirely: A Play in Letters" (1916)

For four voices, two women and two men.

The setting is Mallorca in 1916, semi-voluntary exile for a handful of Americans and English who have been thrown into close quarters because of the exigencies of war. Ava and Bella (roughly, Gertrude and Alice) are two American women who dictate letters to Walter, their English amanuensis. William Cook is an expatriate American artist. They keep company while depending on correspondence to maintain connections with friends in Paris, London, and the U.S. Overall, there is a mixed sense of excitement and adventure along with the boredom and worry of waiting; the feeling of being displaced and stuck while military action takes place elsewhere, the chance that it might arrive here.

Some remarks on group dynamics: Ava and Bella are married. Ava and William are gruff and collegial. Bella and Walter compete for Ava's attention, but are thrown together when William shows up.

"LANDSCAPE" indicates that some play with multiple voices should take place, to be worked out in rehearsal/editing.

FOR THE COUNTRY ENTIRELY: A PLAY IN LETTERS

LANDSCAPE:	Almond trees in the hill
BELLA:	We saw them today.
WALTER:	Dear Mrs. Steele. I like to ask you questions. Do you believe that it is necessary to worship individuality.
BELLA:	We do.
WALTER:	Mrs. Henry Watterson.
AVA:	Of course I have heard.
WALTER:	Dear Sir. Of course I have heard.
BELLA:	They didn't leave the book.
WALTER:	Dear Sir. They didn't leave the book.
AVA:	Yes Yes.
WALTER:	I know what I hear.

BELLA: (MOCKING) Yes sir.
WALTER: Dear Sir.
I heard her hurrying.
BELLA: We all did.
WALTER: Good night.
Isabel Furness.
AVA: I like their names.
WALTER: (EMPHASIS) Anthony Rosello.
BELLA: It's easy to name a street like that.
AVA: It is.
LANDSCAPE: With a view
of trees and a hill.
WALTER: Yes sir.
Herbert.
BELLA: Dear Herbert.
Come again.
William.
AVA: William Cook!

CHAPTER 2

WALTER: Dear Sir.
BELLA/WALTER: A play.
AVA: A great many people ask me in misery.
BELLA/WALTER: Have they come.
WALTER: Dear friends. (PAUSE)
Say what you have to say.
AVA: Dear Whitehead and Paul and Woolson and Thorne. Why
can't you accommodate yourselves and leave me alone.
I don't mean today or yesterday or by counting.
BELLA: Everybody cannot count.
LANDSCAPE: An avenue goes through a city and a street crosses it
crosses the city.
AVA: There is no use in pointing out associations. A great many
people can read.

BELLA: Not women. Not in some countries.
 AVA: Oh yes not in some countries.
 WALTER: Caesar.
 BELLA: Caesar isn't a name that is not used. I have known a great many people have it.
 AVA: Henry Caesar. A class is full and teaching is difficult. They do not understand.
 BELLA: Who does not understand.
 AVA: (GARBLED) [The Barcelonese.]
 LANDSCAPE: Color. A country and a cup where they sell water.
 BELLA: Everybody sells water. In this country.
 WALTER: Everybody sells water in this country.
 AVA: Is it a hot country.
 BELLA: It is not and water is plentiful.
 AVA: Then I do not understand you.
 BELLA: You need not question me.
 WALTER: Dear girl.
 Grandfathers can not make sacrifices for their children.
 It is not expected of them and they are not sacrificed.
 A great many people are sacrificed.
 AVA: Oh dear yes.
 WALTER: Helen.

CHAPTER 3

WILLIAM: Why do you play in letters.
 WALTER: Because we are English.
 WILLIAM: Is it an English custom.
 AVA: It is not an American.
 WILLIAM: Oh yes I remember you did mention.
 WALTER: Dear Mr. and Mrs. Eaton.
 BELLA: Can you recollect can you remember what day it was that we promised
 BELLA/WALTER: to go into the wind and not take shelter.
 WILLIAM: I cannot remember that we ever undertook to do that.

AVA: We are going in another direction.
WILLIAM: To day?
AVA: And day after to morrow.
BELLA: We often spell together.
We like latin.
WILLIAM: How goes it.
WALTER: Frederick and Harriet Beef.
AVA: Do be anxious about me.
AVA/BELLA: We are not anxious about me.
WILLIAM: No you were told to be so were you not.
BELLA: We were not advised.
WILLIAM: No indeed you were not.
BELLA: Dear Mr. Colin Bell.
Do be gracious and come again.
AVA: Soon.
BELLA: As soon as you like.
WILLIAM: I do not know how to reply.
AVA: No you don't and I am so uneasy.
WILLIAM: Not today.
No not at all.
WALTER: Dear Sir.
Good night.

ACT 2

WILLIAM: Here we come to act two.
AVA: Australian papers.
BELLA: Canadian papers.
WILLIAM: American papers.
WALTER: Dear Mrs. Millicant.
BELLA: Do not be insulting.
You know very well that we have not conscription.
AVA: Were you surprised.

LANDSCAPE: In states.
Or in territories.

AVA: My dear Milly. I wish you would come and tell me about Rigoletto.

BELLA: Oh yes handkerchiefs.

AVA: From Bonnets.

WALTER: Good evening Mrs.

BELLA: (INTERRUPTING) That is not well said.

WALTER: Dear Gilbert. Remember me to your mother.

WILLIAM: All the time.

AVA: Dear Mr. Lindo Webb.
I understand why you are not better liked. A great many people expect you to teach them English. You do so and very well. You might be married and have a wife and son. With these helping you to teach you could teach many more people English. Then we can expect that you will change your place of residence.

BELLA: We do not expect you to change your coat.

WALTER: No Englishman does.

BELLA: We understand that.

AVA: Young Bonnet.

WILLIAM: We have been very much annoyed by the impertinence of Mr. Alfred Bonnet.

LANDSCAPE: Little pieces of paper are suddenly burnt.

WILLIAM: In believing a shoe maker you believe his father.

AVA: I do not believe his father.

WILLIAM: Why

BELLA: Because he does not dress well.

WALTER: Dress well dress well.

BELLA: Dear Mrs. Cook.
Have you any special wishes. Do you want to know about almond leaves and almond roots. Or do you refer to olive roots. Olive trees have large roots. I do not know about almond trees.

LANDSCAPE: The rest of the time was spent in deploring the tempest.

SCENE 3

WILLIAM: This was the way to reason. Did he leave after the other came. Was he a sea captain. Was the other one of the same profession although a citizen of another nation. Now as to the word

WILLIAM/AVA: citizen.

WILLIAM: The use of it differs. Some are inclined to

WILLIAM/WALTER: ratify the use of it,

WILLIAM: others prefer to ask

WILLIAM/BELLA: what is a citizen.

WILLIAM: A citizen is one who employing all the uses of his nature cleans the world of adjoining relations.

WILLIAM/AVA: In this way we cannot conquer.

WILLIAM: We do conquer and I ask how,

ALL FOUR: how do you do.

WALTER: Dear Sir. When it is necessary to come you will come.

WILLIAM: Yes sir.

AVA: Dear sir. When it is necessary to be hurried you are not nervous.

WILLIAM: Not at all.

AVA: Very well.

BELLA: Dear Sir. Why have you special places for your handkerchiefs.

WILLIAM: Because they have been so charmingly embroidered.

BELLA: You are pleased then.

WILLIAM: Yes very pleased indeed.

SCENE 3¹

WALTER: Dear Sir.
Extra dresses.

BELLA: Oh yes.

¹ Two Scene 3s in the original Stein text.

WALTER: See here. Extra gloves.
AVA: I do not like the word gloves it has a combination of letters in it that displeases me.
BELLA: Since when.
AVA: Since this evening.
BELLA: I do not understand your objection.
AVA: It is easy to understand if I explain.
WALTER: Dear Genevieve. Do say where you heard them speak of the decision they had come to not to have masked balls.
WILLIAM: I didn't say. They always have masked balls.
WALTER: Oh so they do.
WILLIAM: Yes indeed they do.
AVA: There are many of them?
WILLIAM: A great many.
AVA: Looks.
BELLA: Looks to me.
WALTER: (INTERRUPTING) Dear Sir. Why have you such splendid olive trees.
AVA: Dear Mr. Wilson.
Why have you such plain entrances.
WILLIAM: What do you mean.
AVA: I mean in Mallorca they do it in such a way that every house has an interesting entrance.
WILLIAM: You mean chairs.
AVA: Yes I mean chairs.

ACT 4

SCENE 1

AVA: Dear Sir. Please do not persist.
BELLA: The one in the house said it.
WILLIAM: Dear Lady Cryst what do you say to that again.
AVA: I say nothing.

WILLIAM: Indeed you are discreet and timid.
WALTER: Mrs. Seeman has been disappointed. In Saint Katherine.
BELLA: Yes because of the children.
WALTER: How do you mean.
BELLA: One of them was not bewildering and he blasphemed the
saints.
WALTER: Oh no.
AVA: No one could be older.
WILLIAM: You mean today.
AVA: I mean anyday.
WALTER: Dear Sir. Come to another conclusion.
WILLIAM: Yes I will. Receive me and Cuba.
AVA: You mean the name.
WILLIAM: Yes the name.
BELLA: You always liked hearing noises.
AVA: Not in France.
BELLA: No indeed not in France.
WILLIAM: Not in France.
WALTER: No indeed.
AVA: Really you prepare me.
WILLIAM: I do.
AVA: Not today.
WILLIAM: Today.
AVA: You prepare me today.

SCENE 2

BELLA: This is so pleasing.
WALTER: Dear Sir. How do you pronounce Crowtell.
LANDSCAPE: The land is very near and is seen and nuns fix it.
And the tramway.
WILLIAM: Shall I say streetcar.
AVA: Not necessarily here it is more a country road and the
electricity is easily had.

WILLIAM: Everywhere.
AVA: Yes everywhere.
WILLIAM: That is such a comfort.
WALTER: Dear sir.
BELLA: You mean dear Mr. Rossilo
AVA/BELLA: do you know my older brother.

SCENE 3

WILLIAM: Charles King.
AVA/BELLA/WALTER: (MUTTERING) Lindo Webb Lindo Webb.
WALTER: Dear Charles King. You do not mind that I am in
distress. I have no means of satisfying myself whether I
am obliged to be careful or not.
BELLA: Careful of what.
WALTER: Of what I say in public.
BELLA: Certainly not.
AVA: No?
BELLA: Certainly not.
WILLIAM: Dear Mr. Lindo Webb.
Come again will you.
LANDSCAPE: A great many mountains are higher than any on the island.
WILLIAM: Do you believe in lessons.
WALTER: Of course I do.
AVA: So does Mrs. Gilbert.

SCENE 4

WILLIAM: I am enjoying it.
BELLA: Dear Mr. Lindo Webb. Why do you wish to win.
WALTER: In the more readily seen places there is no muttering.
BELLA: You mean no quarreling.
WALTER: I mean neither one or the other.
BELLA: Oh I understand you.
WALTER: By that I mean that I am poor.

BELLA: I see what you mean.
WALTER: Dear Woodrow. This is a name.
AVA: What does anybody mean by interesting.
BELLA: That is not a word that has that position.
AVA: You mean not nicely.
WALTER: I mean that I am English.
WILLIAM: Dear Mr. Henry.
ALL FOUR: What have you been meaning to do.

SCENE 5

WALTER/BELLA: Dear Sir.
AVA: Why do you speak.
AVA/WILLIAM: Dear Sir.
BELLA: Please me.
WALTER: How can I be called.
WILLIAM: Do you wish to go to market.
WALTER/WILLIAM: Dear Sir.
WALTER: Do you wish me to go to market.
AVA/BELLA: Dear Sir.
BELLA: Do you wish me to have that made.
ALL FOUR: How do you mean.

SCENE 6

BELLA: Dear Sir. Remember that when you have no further requests to make you must not blame me.
WALTER: Dear Sir. I know you do not object to smoke.
AVA: Dear Mrs. Lindo Webb How can you break your teeth. By falling down in the street.
WILLIAM: You mean now when the pavement is so dark.
BELLA: Naturally.
It would not have happened otherwise.
LANDSCAPE: This is because of the necessary condition of lighting.

AVA: We all suffer from that.

SCENE 7

WALTER: Do you remember Charles Mark. Figs. Especially mentioned figs.

AVA: Dear Sir. Will you come today and wear three diamond rings and an officers suit. You have a perfect right to wear an officer's suit. You are a major.

BELLA: Dear Mrs. English. Do you like a different country.

AVA: Do you mean higher up in the hills.

BELLA: Not so very much higher.

ACT 5

SCENE 1

BELLA: This is the last time we will use seasoning.

AVA: You mean you like it better cold.

BELLA: No don't be foolish.

WALTER: Dear Sir. Is there much wisdom in searching for asphodels.

WILLIAM: Not if you already know what they are.

WALTER: We do know now.

WILLIAM: Then there is no use in trying to accustom yourself to their beauty.

BELLA: But we don't find it beautiful.

WALTER: I too have failed to find beauty in them.

WILLIAM: This is not surprising as they do not grow prettily.

AVA: They were a great disappointment to us.

SCENE 2

AVA: We all are able to see I don't care a bit about Lena. We are all able to say

BELLA/WALTER/WILLIAM: I don't care a bit about Lena.

WILLIAM: Dear Mrs. Landor. How can you cease to be troubled about the rest of the winter. How can you cease to be troubled about the rest of the summer and the beginning of the winter.

AVA: Dear Sir. Every evening the snow falls.

BELLA: Red.

AVA: Yes and so do the asphodels.

BELLA: Asphodel isn't red. I know it looks so.

WALTER: Dear friend. Can you give me any pleasure.

AVA: Yesterday afternoon was a holiday.

BELLA: You mean a festival.

AVA: I mean a day of the country.

BELLA: Do you mean that you understand the country.

AVA: No indeed.

SCENE 3

WILLIAM: Dear friends. Have patience.

SCENE 4

AVA: This has ended very well.

WILLIAM: You mean meeting one another.

AVA: Yes and asking us to remain here.

WILLIAM: You mean that a great many people were troubled.

BELLA: Not a great many people.

AVA: Some are very happy.

WALTER: So are others.

WILLIAM: We all have wishes.

WALTER: Expressed wishes.

AVA: Dear Sir. Will you come again and eat ham.

WILLIAM: Not in this country.

BELLA: Fish.

WILLIAM: Not in this country.