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Woman With A Mango, by Gauguin: Etta Cone

Gertrude you are a Gertrude are a Gertrude  
no one in Baltimore is a Gertrude anymore  
If you can't say anything nice about anyone  
come sit next to me  
you said  
and I did  
under Mother and Child come sitting  
in Baltimore in Paris in Baltimore  
no one is a Gertrude is a Gertrude enough

There were the two of us, you said, we were not sisters  
We were not large not then we were not rich  
we were not so different one from the other one  
an eye was an eye was an eye, gazing

A woman would smell  
a woman would hold out her smell and smell and petals  
would drop from Large Reclining Nude  
white petals cool and fragrant and soft  
and dropping and dropping and dropping down  
Three Lives my fingers sore my wrists aching typing  
Come sit next to me you said  
and I did sit I did sit I sat and sat and after I sat I sat and sat

I typed until the "G" key stuck  
Three lives, yours, Claribel's, mine  
I was sitting and sitting under  
Woman With a Mango under Blue Nude  
I was sitting with textiles draped over me  
hoping their weight  
but they are not you, because you have--  
Alice? Alice? Alice?

Is an Alice?  
Gertrude you undertake to overthrow my undertaking  
You say my dessicated loneliness is  
across the ocean in Baltimore and you pull Alice onto  
your lap on the large brown broken armchair  
where you sat with me  
while Pablo's portrait strains above  
You sit, running Alice's hair through your hands

her hair through your fingers  
Your fingers in my hair unpinning tangling  
your lips against my neck  
There is no there there now  
anymore  
there is Henri there is Vincent there is Paul and Paul there is Gustave  
my neck a neck is a neck with a rose  
that died and petals like brown rain  
I like what is, you said  
I like what is mine I like it

\*with reference to: Three Lives, Stanzas in Meditation (VII), Sacred Emily, by Gertrude Stein