

THE TRYSTING PLACE(S)

a short play by Mimi Gisolfi D'Aponte

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Synopsis

THE TRYSTING PLACE(S) is a three scene 15-minute play in which three actors may play different roles in each scene, or nine actors may play individual roles. A young man and young woman meet in a hospital emergency room, a middle-aged man and middle-aged woman meet in a Ford-Chevrolet waiting room, and an elderly man and elderly woman meet in a small town library.

Characters

FANNY and FRANCESCO find themselves with emergency maladies in the early morning hours at a hospital and learn that they went to the same public schools. A male nurse attends them.

GEORGIANA and JOE are each waiting for auto repairs and strike up a conversation that becomes personal. A mechanic attends them.

HELEN and HARVEY meet over a puzzle laid out on a library table. A librarian attends them.

Setting

The same simple set may be used for each scene: some chairs and a table. Props may be fun: a hospital drip, a glass and a towel in scene one; car keys and something that passes for a coffee machine in scene two; a puzzle on the table and some books in scene three. And a sign or two for each scene.

THE TRYSTING PLACE(S)

SCENE ONE

(A sign SL reads EMERGENCY; another SR reads GENERAL HOSPITAL. A room with four medical lounge chairs. FRANCESCO, a handsome young man of 25, is sitting in a CS chair, holding his right hand high up in the air with a drip attached to his arm. Two beats. Enter FANNY, a pretty young woman of 25, holding her head up with nose covered by a large white handkerchief that's bloody. She holds a white paper in the other hand.)

FANNY

(muffled by handkerchief) Could somebody call a nurse!

FRANSCESCO

(taking in situation) Sure! Hey, Nurse, Nurse, someone's bleeding here!

(FANNY stands in middle of room, nose in air, frozen)

Sit down Miss! Sit down!

(Enter Male NURSE)

NURSE

No need to panic, boys and girls. There you go, Miss.

(Guides FANNY to one chair away from FRANCESCO)

Referral please.

(FANNY sinks into chair, keeps holding bloody handkerchief over nose, and hands paper to NURSE)

NURSE (Cont'd)

You been here before?

(FANNY nods "yes")

Same complaint?

(FANNY nods "yes" again.)

NURSE

I'll be back.

(NURSE exits SL. Beat)

FRANCESCO

Are you OK?

(FANNY nods "yes")

Pretty scary at 3 am, I guess . . .

(FANNY nods "yes" –
vigorously this time)

Yeah, my arm started swelling up at midnight, and then I looked and saw this red line going all the way up?

(FANNY still holding nose, sits up
and looks across at
FRANCESCO'S arm)

So I got here around 12:30.

FANNY

(very muffled) What is it?

FRANCESCO

What?

FANNY

(still muffled, nose in air) What happened?

FRANCESCO

Oh, I got an infected finger I guess from a cut with a chain saw. I make wood sculptures see, and I was sculpting this torso when the saw slipped. I thought it was OK – that was about a week ago, but last night – I mean this morning – big arm and nasty red line.

FANNY

(muffled) That's terrible. Could you call the nurse again?

FRANCESCO

Wow, you're getting blood all down your shirt - your sweater! Nurse! Hey, Nurse, we need help here! Use this!

(FRANCESCO tosses towel from his lap to FANNY who puts it over her face.
Enter Nurse)

NURSE

Now boys and girls, no need to panic, and no need to suffocate. Sit back and relax, Miss. I'm going to stop that bleeding, and then I'll give you some pills to swallow. Head back please. Stay still. This may hurt, but just for a minute.

(NURSE takes away handkerchief and towel and, we assume, plugs up nose bleed. A muffled GROAN from FANNY)

NURSE

All right now?

(FANNY nods "yes" and NURSE hands her pills and water)

Swallow please.

(FANNY swallows pills with head back)

Good. Now please maintain that position for five minutes.

(NURSE turns to FRANCESCO)

Your drip is almost finished, young man. You should be good to go when it's done. .

(NURSE exits SL briskly)

FRANCESCO

(to FANNY) Where does he get that "young man" stuff?

FANNY

(nose still in air) How old are you?

FRANCESCO

Me? 25!

FANNY

Me too.

FRANCESCO

Cool. How's your nose feeling.

FANNY

(nose still in air) Well, it's stopped bleeding. How's your arm doing?

FRANCESCO

God, it looks like the red line is still traveling. Maybe I need that Nurse to change this drip. It's not making things any better - maybe worse.

FANNY

Nurse! Hey Nurse!

(Beat)

I don't see him coming. I'm not attached - maybe I'll go look for him . . .

FRANCESCO

Please! Thanks a lot.

(FANNY stands up with handkerchief and begins to exit SL, just as NURSE enters)

NURSE

Now boys and girls, just like I said before, no need to panic. Young lady, please sit back down. You don't need to make my good work plugging you up go down the drain.

(FANNY sits again, and NURSE whips new drip from pocket and installs over FRANCESCO)

Now young man, we'll set you up just fine.

FRANCESCO

I think maybe I was allergic to the drip, because the red line was growing.

NURSE

Don't think too much. Another few minutes, you'll be right as rain.

(NURSE exits. Beat)

FANNY

Do you saw with your right hand or your left?

FRANCESCO

Saw?

FANNY

As in chain sawing.

FRANCESCO

Oh, right. I saw with my left. I'm left-handed.

FANNY

Me too.

FRANCESCO

No kidding!

FANNY

No kidding. And I paint with my left hand.

FRANCESCO

Tell me you're a painter.

FANNY

I'm an artist and I paint.

FRANCESCO

That's what I meant. What do you paint?

FANNY

Big canvases. Sometimes I stretch too far – from my ladder? And then I take a tumble. Hence the nose bleed. It's happened before.

FRANCESCO

I see. *(pause)* I'm Francesco.

FANNY

Hey. My name is Fanny.

FRANCESCO

Fanny. You know, I don't want you to take this the wrong way - I mean, it's the oldest line in the book.

FANNY

What is?

FRANCESCO

The fact that you look familiar. I would have thought that right away when you walked in except for the handkerchief.

FANNY

Really.

FRANCESCO

Really. I mean, did you go to PS 125 or something? As a kid?

FANNY

Uh, no.

FRANCESCO

What about IS 88?

FANNY

Well, yeah.

FRANCESCO

And was there a science teacher named De Falco?

FANNY

Mr. De Falco. He was cool.

FRANCESCO

He was!

(Enter NURSE from SL)

All right, boys and girls. Let's take a look.

(NURSE checks FANNY's nose)

You can straighten out your head now, young lady.

(NURSE unhooks FRANCESCO's
drip)

You can put your arm down now, young man. The doctor will be on his rounds in a few minutes, and after he takes a look, you're both good to go. Have a good night.

(NURSE exits SL briskly)

FRANCESCO

Fanny. You said your name is Fanny?

(FANNY's face is really visible for the first time as she turns towards FRANCESCO)

FANNY

That's what they call me.

FRANCESCO

(FRANCESCO really studies FANNY for the first time)

So why didn't we know each other in 7th grade?

FANNY

We must have been in different sections - I was in the advanced class.

FRANCESCO

Advanced class, huh? Fanny. I like that name. Fanny, could we go for coffee when we get out of here?

FANNY

Well, I don't usually go anywhere with men I don't know.

FRANCESCO

But you know me. We're both from IS 88 and just missed each other.

FANNY

Yeah, but that's not much of a reason.

FRANCESCO

Well, we're in ER together. That's a bonding experience.

FANNY

You know what's bonding?

FRANCESCO

What?

FANNY

That Fanny's really short for Francesca.

FRANCESCO

You didn't tell me!

FANNY

Well, I'm telling you now.

FRANCESCO

So we're on for coffee?

FANNY

I guess.

(FANNY and FRANCESCO stare at each other. CURTAIN)

SCENE TWO

(Big sign on SR reads CUSTOMER WAITING ROOM. Big sign on SR reads FORD – CHEVROLET. There are 2 chairs SR and 2 chairs SL. JOE, 55ish, perhaps heavy and balding, is seated SR reading a newspaper. There is a coffee machine UCS, and GEORGIANA, 45ish and perhaps dumpy, is attempting to make it work)

GEORGIANA

Come on now. You've got my dollar, so what about the cup of coffee?

(GEORGIANA pushes all the buttons and with paper cup in hand addresses everyone and no one)

Well I guess that's one lost dollar bill.

JOE

(*looking up*) Trouble with the machine?

GEORGIANA

Seems to be. Or else I just can't make it work.

JOE

Well, (*gets up*) let's take a look.

(JOE approaches machine and gives it a good kick. Coffee starts to drip)

GEORGIANA

Oh my! Let me put the cup back under!

(As GEORGIANA attempts to put cup under dripping coffee she bumps heads with JOE who's still looking at machine)

I'm so sorry!!

JOE

(*rubbing head*) Not a problem, ma'am. Here, take your coffee.

(JOE takes full cup and begins to hand it to GEORGIANA)

GEORGIANA

Oh thank you!

(Some coffee spills)

Oh God, I didn't spill on your jacket, did I?

JOE

No, just on my hand.

GEORGIANA

Oh God, did I burn you?!

JOE

No lady, I'm fine, thanks. (*sits*)

GEORGIANA

Oh thank heavens! I'm so sorry – again!

(GEORGIANA starts to sit next to
JOE, but then moves to opposite
chair)

Just in case. Not taking another chance on spilling!

JOE

How's the coffee?

GEORGIANA

Good – well, just OK. I'm a Dunkin' Donuts coffee fan myself.

JOE

Yeah, I like Dunkin' Donuts.

PAUSE

GEORGIANA

So, are you in for a Chevy?

JOE

No, I'm a Ford man myself.

GEORGIANA

Oh. Well that's nice. I always had Fords, but I switched recently.

JOE

Why?

GEORGIANA

Oh, it's a kind of complicated story. See, my daughter graduated from Law School last June?
Top 10% of her class.

JOE

Where?

GEORGIANA

Brooklyn Law.

JOE

Uh huh.

GEORGIANA

And I'm so proud of her! I mean I never dreamed anybody in my family would do something like that, you know? I mean, we were taught that the woman took care of the house, you know, and the men worked and brought home the bacon, and that's the way it was.

JOE

Used to be.

GEORGIANA

Right. But my daughter did me so proud! I mean she just about put herself through school with scholarships and all – my husband died years ago – no more bacon, and I took up waitressing, you know?

JOE

Uh huh. So what about the Ford?

GEORGIANA

Oh, right, I almost forgot! Well, when she graduated, my daughter, in the top 10%, she got job offers, even one from Colorado. And I was so afraid she'd have to go far away. But the best one came from Albany, and thank heavens, Albany's not too far! But of course then she would need a car, you know, Albany's almost country – at least compared to New York!

JOE

Yeah, I've been up there, upstate. It's nice there.

GEORGIANA

It is! I've been up to see her now a couple of times. So anyway, I had an almost brand new Ford Camero, yellow with leather seats – I love leather seats – just two years old. I love to name my cars, and this one's name is Caterina. So I gave my daughter Caterina for a graduation present so she could go to her new job in style!

JOE

That was nice of you.

GEORGIANA

Oh my daughter didn't want to take Caterina, she said Ma I know how you love that car! But I said I want you to have the car for your new job! No buts! And so then I shopped around for a used car – you know, I don't need to go to a law office or anything. I just drive out to Queens where I waitress because the trains don't go close enough to the restaurant. And that's how I came to get the sedan, you know, the Chevy Impala from this dealer here.

JOE

So how's it running?

GEORGIANA

Between you and me? Stick to Fords! Of course my Impala's pretty old – ten years, so for a ten year old car, I guess it's running pretty good. *(pause)* So – how's your Ford doing?

JOE

Oh, she's good, very good. Taurus wagon, 2003 and still going strong.

GEORGIANA

So, you must be a family man, with a wagon and all.

JOE

Not me. I'm a loner. And a construction man –small construction. The car's loaded with tools and wood all the time.

GEORGIANA

Well, that's nice. I guess you like your work. Sort of like an artist.

JOE

Yeah, when you think of it that way, you're right. A kind of wood artist.

(TECHNICIAN enters SL)

TECHNICIAN

Here's your keys, Mr. Maese. All set. Just stop at the cashier and your car's waiting for you out front.

JOE

Thanks Mike.

(TECHNICIAN gives JOE keys)

TECHNICIAN

Oh, by the way, inside line - you might just want to take a look in the show room on your way out - pre-owned Taurus - 2008. She's beautiful - runs like a 2010.

JOE

Maybe next round, Mike. I'm good for now.

(JOE stands up, ready to leave)

TECHNICIAN

Sure thing.

(TECHNICIAN exits)

GIORGIANA

Looks like a sales pitch.

JOE

Guess so. But that techie knows his stuff.

GEORGIANA

Well, thank you for helping me with coffee, Mr. Maese. It's been nice talking with you.

JOE

My name's Joe. Nice talking to you too.

GEORGIANA

Thanks. I'm Georgiana.

JOE

Georgiana. Nice name.

(JOE starts out, then turns back suddenly)

Say, Georgiana, how about grabbing a cup of coffee at Dunkin' Donuts while they're work on your old Chevy? We can spin around the block in my wagon and be back in no time . . .

GEORGIANA

A good cup of coffee and a ride around the block in a Ford? I'll have to tell my daughter about this! OK Joe, you're on!

(GEORGIANA laughs and rises and begins to put on her coat.
CURTAIN)

SCENE THREE

(A sign SL next to a large bookcase reads FREE LIBRARY. Another SR reads QUIET PLEASE. There is a puzzle laid out on a large table CS. HELEN, a woman in her seventies, is seated at the table SR poring over the puzzle.)

HELEN

Damn!

(HELEN has lost a piece and starts searching around the table. No luck. Finally she kneels down to search UNDER the table. Enter HENRY, an attractive man in his seventies with books in his hand. HENRY starts to walk past the table, but then sees HELEN whose head is now UNDER the table.)

HENRY

May I help you?

HELEN

Oh dear!

(HELEN gets up, pulls herself together and takes a long look at HENRY)

(very annoyed) I just dropped THE key piece to the most difficult puzzle they've ever put out here.

HENRY

I see. Under the table?

HELEN

Well, I thought so, but it doesn't seem to be there.

HENRY

What color?

HELEN

(HELEN goes to table and
retrieves two pieces)

Somewhat blue like this piece, but exactly the shape of this green piece.

HENRY

I see. May I help?

HELEN

That would be lovely. But do you do puzzles? (*sits*)

HENRY

Oh yes, in a past life. But not in a while. And never in a library.

HELEN

Yes, it's rather strange to do puzzles in libraries. I usually come in for a good book or two, or to return a video –well now to return a DVD – and then end up getting stuck – literally stuck! at this table. Infantile!

HENRY

Not at all, not at all! If I recall my puzzle days I seem to remember patience, concentration, focus – surely mature qualities of mind.

HELEN

Well, that is poetically put!

HENRY

Thank you. Now, you said we're looking for a blue piece that looks like what?

HELEN

(*piece still in hand*) Like this green one.

HENRY

Right. May I?

HELEN

But of course! Welcome to puzzle mania!

(HENRY sits in chair opposite
HELEN and studies puzzle)

HENRY

So this is a Native American design . . .

HELEN

Yes, here's the title – "Island of the Sun Offering Cloth."

(HELEN holds up top of puzzle
box)

I don't think I've ever seen such small pieces. And so many of them look almost identical.

HENRY

Yes, they do. How many pieces?

HELEN

1500. And here's where that key piece should go – see?

(HELEN and HENRY accidentally
bump heads over puzzle)

HELEN & HENRY

Pardon me! *(both laugh)*

HENRY

(HENRY rises and holds out hand)

My name is Henry Anderson.

HELEN

(shaking hands) How do you do? I'm Helen – Helen Torbit.

HENRY

(sits again) Helen Torbit. Not possibly the Torbits who underwrote the Museum opening at Horton's Landing recently?

HELEN

Yes, the same family. The renovation was a pet project of my late husband, Harold. His bequest two years ago rallied the Board to act after years of delay.

HENRY

Condolences, Mrs. Torbit, on the loss of your husband. But congratulations on his foresight. I've rarely seen a museum of such modest size so tastefully appointed.

HELEN

My goodness! You sound like a curator!

HENRY

I was actually, in a past life – *(laughs)* In my puzzle period.

(Enter LIBRARIAN SL)

HELEN

What kind of curator?

LIBRARIAN

Excuse me, but we will be closing in five minutes. Saturday hours. Thank you.

(Exit LIBRARIAN SR)

HENRY

(to Librarian's back) Thank you. Well, a fitting closing hour –tea time.

HELEN

How annoying! We haven't yet found that puzzle piece and we're about to be closed out of the search.

HENRY

Five minutes to go. Let's take another look around.

(HENRY bends down,
looking around the table
legs)

Ah-hah! Pardon me just a moment . . .

(HENRY gets on hands and
knees and reaches under
the chair HELEN is sitting
on)

HELEN

Gracious!

(HENRY comes up for air, a
piece in hand)

HENRY

Would this be blue with green shape?

(HENRY hands piece to
HELEN and then stands
up)

HELEN

Sir Galahad! Wonderful! Oh, here we go! (*places puzzle piece*) An entire section complete!

HENRY

You are indeed a puzzle devotee, Mrs. Torbit.

HELEN

Indeed I am, Mr. Anderson. And you've not yet told me what sort of curator you are.

HENRY

Wood artifacts.

HELEN

Wood artifacts! Where?

(Enter LIBRARIAN)

LIBRARIAN

Sorry folks, I'm about to lock the doors.

HENRY

Well, unless we wish to risk being locked in together for the rest of the weekend, Mrs. Torbit, may I confess my career peregrinations over a cup of tea – or coffee – at the diner next door?

HELEN

Anxious as I am to learn about wood artifacts, Mr. Anderson, I must ask the essential question.

HENRY

Which is?

HELEN

Well, to put it fairly bluntly, are you a free agent?

HENRY

Oh that. Yes indeed, Mrs. Torbet – I've never been freer.

HELEN

Well then!

LIBRARIAN

This way out, folks.

(HELEN and HENRY
follow LIBRARIAN and
exit SR. CURTAIN)

