

Trust Falls

A two-person monologue by Taylor Basso

From "An Evening Without Judgment"

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**ACT I**

**SCENE IV**

CHARLIE and TRISTAN stand and approach the audience. They are that couple who are so ill-suited to one another that their mere presence at a social event ensures that everyone will have a terrible time. TRISTAN seems eager to be present, if slightly nervous. CHARLIE is barely suppressing his rage and is dressed like a black cat, with whiskers on his face, kitty ears, a collar, and a long black tail. He seems to actively hate his boyfriend. They address the audience directly, though for the most of the first part of the monologue CHARLIE is fixing TRISTAN with an angry glare.

TRISTAN

Hi, everyone. I'm Tristan. This is Charlie. Say hi, Charlie.

CHARLIE says nothing and instead fixes TRISTAN with a furious look.

TRISTAN

He's a little shy in front of new groups of people. Uh, I guess I've been coming to this group for about a year. This is Charlie's first night... the, uh, first time I've been able to get him out of the house.

CHARLIE

I was told this would be a costume party.

TRISTAN

He's a kitty!

CHARLIE

Yeah. Good job.

TRISTAN

He's a little grumpy because I played a bit of a trick to get him out here.

CHARLIE

I should have realised when you weren't wearing a costume. Everyone was looking at me on the bus. I feel like a jackass.

(CONTINUED)

TRISTAN

Well, you look like a kitty!

TRISTAN's attempt at humour goes over incredibly poorly, as CHARLIE fixes him with an extended glare. Awkward silence.

TRISTAN

Dr. Rourke -- that's my therapist,  
Dr. Rourke -- he said it's  
important for both of us to be as  
involved as possible in the healing  
process if we want our wanderlust  
wounds to scab over and form a scar  
of mutual self-acceptance. Isn't  
that right, Charlie?

CHARLIE pointedly looks in the other direction.

TRISTAN

He's usually far more talkative  
than this, I promise. He's quite  
lovely. You should see him play  
charades! He's quite the cut up.

CHARLIE

I wish someone would cut you.

TRISTAN laughs nervously.

TRISTAN

It's good, though, that we have  
this dialogue going. It's better  
than bottling everything up,  
because then you get a situation  
where you're in risk of becoming  
physically abusive to one another  
because you've run out of things to  
say. It's like I always say,  
"there's only one letter between  
silence and violence."

CHARLIE

There's two.

TRISTAN

What? No, there's only one, or they  
wouldn't rhyme.

CHARLIE

There's a silent 'o' in violence.

TRISTAN

I think you mean a violent 'o.'

TRISTAN looks incredibly proud of himself. CHARLIE looks angrier than ever. Long pause.

TRISTAN

Maybe I'll loosen everyone up with an anecdote. When I was young, I had this parakeet, Pepe...

CHARLIE

You're going to tell the Pepe story?

TRISTAN

What?

CHARLIE

It makes you look crazy.

TRISTAN

It does not.

CHARLIE

All of your stories make you look crazy.

TRISTAN

It's a sweet story.

CHARLIE

He lets the parakeet free in the woods.

TRISTAN

Charlie! I really wanted to tell that story.

CHARLIE

Yeah, well, these things happen.

Long, awkward pause. TRISTAN wears a tight smile and laughs nervously.

TRISTAN

Clearly, we've hit a speed bump on the highway to interpersonal wellness, so it's time to call AAA - that is, Attempts At Assuaging. I want to try an exercise Dr. Rourke taught me. We take each other's hands...

(CONTINUED)

TRISTAN puts his hands out but CHARLIE does not. TRISTAN tries to take CHARLIE's hands but CHARLIE pulls them away angrily.

TRISTAN

We take each other's h -- well, we can skip that part. Anyway, we look into each other's eyes, and we take turns listing our fears.

CHARLIE

Jesus Christ.

TRISTAN

We have to take this seriously if we want our relationship to survive. I'll start. Thunderstorms.

Pause. CHARLIE says nothing.

TRISTAN

Large dogs.

Long pause, then, very significantly:

TRISTAN

Losing you.

CHARLIE

He makes us do this during sex, too.

TRISTAN

Focus, Charlie.

CHARLIE

I haven't orgasmed in three months.

TRISTAN

You're not doing the exercise properly.

CHARLIE

Have you ever had twenty minutes of unbroken eye contact with the person you're fucking? It's pretty spooky.

TRISTAN

Charlie, I don't think this is any  
--

CHARLIE

Once I tried to distract myself by putting on music. You know. *During*. But the CD player switched over to the *Braveheart* soundtrack and I had to tap out midway because the bagpipes mixed with the crazy eyes and it was all a little too intense for me.

TRISTAN

What is your fear, Charlie?

CHARLIE

I'm afraid I will never have normal sex again.

TRISTAN

You always do this.

CHARLIE

Do what?

TRISTAN

I'm trying to help our relationship and you sabotage it. Dr. Rourke says you distance yourself from your emotional payload to prevent it from being neutralised in a negative reinforcement incident, or N.R.I. That's why you wear your armour of insults instead of your happy hat. What?

CHARLIE

Dr. Rourke lives in that complex on Beecher St., right?

TRISTAN

Yeah, why?

CHARLIE

How long do you think it would take the cops to get there?

TRISTAN

What?

CHARLIE

Idle curiosity.

(CONTINUED)

TRISTAN  
I'll take "Things That Killed the  
Cat" for \$200, please, Alex! Get  
it? Like the game show?

CHARLIE  
I want to set you on fire.

TRISTAN  
What?

CHARLIE  
*I want to set you on fire.*

Long, uncomfortable pause.

TRISTAN  
I love you.

No response. Longest and most uncomfortable pause yet.

TRISTAN  
It worries me, when he doesn't  
talk. I had an old boyfriend, you  
know, Culvir.

CHARLIE  
Oh, God, not the Culvir thing.

TRISTAN  
We were in love, deeply so.

CHARLIE  
He was a weirdo. Do you know he  
would only eat leeks?

TRISTAN  
I've never met someone with a more  
beautiful soul.

CHARLIE  
Boiled leeks, fried leeks.

TRISTAN  
And the eyes of a poet.

CHARLIE  
Who the fuck fries a leek? Where  
does that idea even come from?

TRISTAN  
But he had the worst broody streak.  
Something would upset him and he  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

TRISTAN (cont'd)  
would mull it over for days,  
whipping himself into a reverie of  
sadness. Sometimes I'd come to the  
table at breakfast, to serve him  
his special soy supplements, and  
I'd ask him, "what's the matter,  
doodlebug?" -- it was my nickname  
for him, doodlebug -- and he'd just  
sigh and look up at me with those  
big eyes like his heart was about  
to break.

CHARLIE  
Was he the one who self-harmed?

TRISTAN  
He was one of them. Mostly though,  
he had that thing where when you  
got him upset he'd take small  
things from your house and insert  
them into various orifices.

CHARLIE  
Oh, God, him.

TRISTAN  
Which is perfectly normal, when you  
think about it.

CHARLIE  
He comes over one night, soused to  
the gills and demanding to have  
Tristan back in his life, and of  
course, I'm like, "take him."

TRISTAN  
You put up more of a fight than  
that.

CHARLIE  
While you were sobbing at him in  
the living room, I was actually  
packing your bag.

TRISTAN  
He was like a man possessed,  
Culvir. Realised he'd done wrong by  
me and desperately wanted back in  
my life.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLIE

At some point, he wanders into my room and shuts the door, and while I'm trying to convince Tristan to go with this psycho but still leave an envelope with enough cash to pay off the remainder of the lease, I hear this horrible sucking noise.

TRISTAN

I would describe it as moist.

CHARLIE

We open the door to check on this guy, and all of a sudden the complete Jane Austen is missing from my desktop and he's walking with a limp.

TRISTAN

It was an act of passion.

CHARLIE

We rushed him to the hospital. Seven hours of invasive surgery later, all we had to show for our trouble was an unusable copy of *Northanger Abbey* that smelled faintly of leeks.

TRISTAN

Eyes of a poet.

CHARLIE

This is what I mean when I say all of your stories make you look crazy.

Long pause as TRISTAN fishes for something to try to say.

TRISTAN

I'll never forget how Charlie and I met.

CHARLIE

Ew.

TRISTAN

I was waiting for my bus, the 541

--

(CONTINUED)

CHARLIE  
Wash your face.

TRISTAN  
Pardon?

CHARLIE  
*Wash. Your. Face.*

Long pause. Tight smile on TRISTAN. CHARLIE is about to cry out of anger and humiliation.

TRISTAN  
It's because I cheated on him.

CHARLIE  
I was not upset by that.

TRISTAN  
It was the greatest mistake of my life. It was one of those hot summer evenings where the sun drops in the sky like a peach in one of those decorative liqueur bottles you buy in Cozumel but can't get past customs.

CHARLIE  
I was so glad when he cheated on me.

TRISTAN  
His name was Scott. He had perfect tanned skin, thick hair, stony eyes  
--

CHARLIE  
They're *cousins*. By marriage, not by blood, but it's still creepy, right?

TRISTAN  
Can I finish?

CHARLIE  
By all means.

TRISTAN  
Let me tell my side of the story, without any sassy remarks. You just stand there.

CHARLIE shrugs.

TRISTAN

Yes, we're cousins. Third cousins, to be exact. Still, the sexual tension between us at family reunions could have been cut with a knife. *Stop laughing.*

CHARLIE

Sorry, please continue your gripping tale of gay incest. I'll take notes in case I ever contemplate a career in Harlequin Romance.

TRISTAN

It was 7:00 pm and a chance meeting outside the Stuckey's turned into something more. I invited him back to my place, to enjoy our food --

CHARLIE

Really? I thought you ate out.

TRISTAN

That's disgusting. Anyway, the night wound on, and the air was thick with passion and MSG. Our breath laced with burger, we surrendered to our animal instincts and took each other, then and there. And I was sated. Later, though, the fairy dust turned to powdered glass when Charlie entered and found us, mid-coitus, wrapped in each other's man flesh.

CHARLIE

I left my debit card by the sink. When Tristan saw me, he started crying and babbling and went into the bathroom to throw up. He left me in the living room to make small talk with Scott. It was pretty awkward.

TRISTAN

I've never in my life been so torn between my heart and my loins.

CHARLIE

He left an ass-shaped lube stain on my couch. I had to flip the cushion.

(CONTINUED)

TRISTAN

I felt like Janet Evanovich's seminal heroine, Stephanie Plum -- trapped in a life of daring and intrigue between two lovers.

CHARLIE

I must have missed the one where Stephanie Plum threw up in my hamper.

TRISTAN

I still owe you for those corduroys.

CHARLIE

Don't bother; they were yours.

TRISTAN

Scott and I haven't seen each other since that fateful day. Well, I guess Nana's birthday.

CHARLIE

You two should hook up. You were good together.

TRISTAN

Me and Nana?

CHARLIE

Yes, Tristan. Fuck your grandmother.

TRISTAN

As you can see by his foul mouth and even fouler attitude, Charlie still hasn't forgiven me. He holds the whole thing against me, though I've apologised again and again.

CHARLIE

Truthfully, I'm more upset that you ruined my couch.

TRISTAN

I just know if I can earn his forgiveness, we can start fresh.

CHARLIE

It was a really nice couch.

(CONTINUED)

TRISTAN

Why won't you let me in?

CHARLIE

Because I'm afraid of loving you too much.

TRISTAN

Really?

CHARLIE

No.

Long pause. CHARLIE seems amused with himself.

CHARLIE

He calls me. All the time.

TRISTAN

I'm concerned.

CHARLIE

I call it the phone leash. Every fifteen minutes without fail. Every five if I'm with another guy.

TRISTAN

I'm concerned.

CHARLIE

I'm never with anyone! I'm never doing anything! You scared away all of my friends!

TRISTAN

I suppose they weren't really your friends, were they?

CHARLIE

You killed Clara's cat!

TRISTAN

What?

CHARLIE

You dropped it off a fifth floor balcony and you killed it.

TRISTAN

I was just trying to scare her because you were spending all of your time with her. I thought it would land on its feet. You'd know all about that, right, kitten?

(CONTINUED)

CHARLIE

Just because I'm dressed up doesn't make it suddenly funny that you murdered my friend's cat.

TRISTAN

I could make that *Jeopardy!* joke again?

CHARLIE

Sometimes, I think you don't want me to have any friends so I'll only be able to spend time with you. You don't want me to have any fun.

TRISTAN

What stops you from having fun? Do a night out on the town! Go out for drinks!

CHARLIE

You've systematically alienated all of my old acquaintances. When you see someone out for drinks in commercials, they tend to be surrounded by happy people. That was supposed to be my life: clinking glasses at some overpriced bar and grill, not sitting at home on a Friday night drinking homemade Bellinis out of the fish tank.

TRISTAN

So what happened to the fighting fish?

CHARLIE

There was never a fighting fish. What fucking planet are you on?

TRISTAN

Poor Poncho.

Long pause.

TRISTAN

We did a retreat, a few months back. You know, one of those couples' things out at Rainbow Trout Lake.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLIE

He pretended he won the tickets in a radio contest. He even gave me a tape of the fake radio show.

TRISTAN

It could have been real.

CHARLIE

Who just tapes random radio shows in case they happen to win a prize?

TRISTAN

It was a very convincing fake.

CHARLIE

Our relationship is a very convincing fake.

TRISTAN

We did a lot of those ice-breaking exercises. Passing the invisible ball, that thing where you say your name --

CHARLIE & TRISTAN

-- and an adjective that starts with the same letter.

CHARLIE

Mine was 'C.'

TRISTAN

Yours was inappropriate.

CHARLIE

Yeah.

TRISTAN

We did trust falls, too. You know?

TRISTAN mimes closing his eyes and falling into the arms of another person. CHARLIE covertly starts stifling laughter.

TRISTAN

All of the other couples did fine, and then -- you're laughing.

CHARLIE

Yeah.

TRISTAN  
He let me drop.

CHARLIE loses it and starts laughing loudly. He can barely speak.

TRISTAN  
It's not funny.

CHARLIE makes a noise of disagreement.

TRISTAN  
I got a concussion.

CHARLIE  
He got a bruise.

TRISTAN  
I could have gotten a concussion.

CHARLIE  
He spent six hours in the hospital badgering this poor nurse about the results of his x-ray.

TRISTAN  
I needed that x-ray.

CHARLIE  
Oh, you didn't.

TRISTAN  
What if I'd had a tumour?

CHARLIE  
What the fuck?

TRISTAN  
What if I'd had a tumour that I didn't know about and I was meant to get that x-ray done because I was could coincidentally find out that I had cancer? I saw that movie, *Last Holiday* with Queen Latifah.

CHARLIE  
She didn't have cancer. *Last Holiday* is a romantic comedy and it wouldn't very comedic or romantic if Queen Latifah died of cancer at the end.

TRISTAN

She didn't have cancer?

CHARLIE

The CAT scan was broken or the x-ray was upside down or something.

TRISTAN

Well, you've ruined the ending of the film for everyone.

CHARLIE

It didn't win any Oscars.

TRISTAN

It should have.

CHARLIE

Oh my God.

TRISTAN

Queen Latifah is an Oscar-nominated actress.

CHARLIE

Oh my God.

TRISTAN

For *Chicago*.

CHARLIE

I hate you so much.

One final, long, horrible pause.

CHARLIE

The photoshopping stuff was creepy.

TRISTAN

It was a gesture of affection.

CHARLIE

He started photoshopping our heads onto these photos of like... gay couples. Like not even porn or anything, but stock photography, which is even weirder. I think he just Google Imaged "homosexual" and photoshopped us onto whatever pictures he found.

(CONTINUED)

TRISTAN

That's not fair. I did the  
*Brokeback Mountain* poster, too.

CHARLIE

That's weird, though, Tristan.

TRISTAN

Everybody does it.

CHARLIE

No.

TRISTAN

And I edited our faces into my  
sister's wedding.

CHARLIE

I don't know why you think that  
helps your case.

TRISTAN

It's cute.

CHARLIE

No, because you're already in the  
picture as part of the wedding  
party, and then you're the groom.  
And I'm the bride. And I guess he  
tried to make the bridal gown look  
like pants so he put a dark line up  
the middle of the dress and turned  
it into two huge, billowy white  
legs. I look like I have  
elephantiasis of the limbs.

TRISTAN

Like that woman on the TLC show.

CHARLIE

He photoshopped us onto a photo of  
\*NSYNC. He was Justin Timberlake  
and I was all four of the other  
ones.

TRISTAN

She had to get her legs amputated,  
I think, the poor thing.

CHARLIE

Who wants to be Chris Kirkpatrick?  
Does he even have a career?

(CONTINUED)

TRISTAN

I think he was on that dancing  
reality show, with Lil' Mama.

CHARLIE

Does *she* have a career?

TRISTAN

More of a career than that poor  
woman with the giant legs.

CHARLIE

Perhaps they should have given her  
the Oscar. I bet *her* CAT scan  
didn't come back negative.

TRISTAN

Why do they call it a CAT scan?

CHARLIE

Every time you mention cats, it  
reminds me that you killed one.

TRISTAN

Call me curiosity.

CHARLIE

You're intolerable.

TRISTAN

You're dressed as a cat. I have  
them on the brain.

CHARLIE

I was not anticipating that I would  
be spending this much time with you  
tonight.

TRISTAN

Who were you going to go home with?

CHARLIE

I didn't think that far in advance.  
I was just excited to be drinking  
out of something other than a  
terrarium.

TRISTAN

Saucer of milk?

CHARLIE

It physically pains me to speak to  
you. Anyone who professes to love  
you must be insane.

(CONTINUED)

TRISTAN

Do you love me?

CHARLIE

You're the worst person I've ever known.

TRISTAN

Do you love me?

CHARLIE

I hate you like poison.

TRISTAN

Do you *love me*?

CHARLIE

When I'm drunk, or bored.

TRISTAN

That's often.

CHARLIE

Pitiably.

TRISTAN

Dr. Rourke taught me this trick where if you repeat a question three times, people will answer in the affirmative.

CHARLIE

To shut you up.

TRISTAN

I think it's the power of suggestion or something.

CHARLIE

That's not love, not really. It's manipulation.

TRISTAN

It's the closest I'll get.

CHARLIE

Yeah, probably.

TRISTAN

Aren't we a pair?

(CONTINUED)

CHARLIE

No.

TRISTAN

It's like we were fated.

CHARLIE

Quit trying to trick me into tolerating you.

TRISTAN

I love you.

CHARLIE

I know.

TRISTAN

Are we still together?

CHARLIE

Yeah.

TRISTAN

Why?

CHARLIE

Stockholm syndrome? Or God just hates me.

TRISTAN

I guess that will have to be good enough.

A briefer pause than usual.

TRISTAN

This is where you're supposed to tell me that I shouldn't have to settle.

CHARLIE

Don't make me lie, Tristan.

Another brief pause.

TRISTAN

Your whiskers are cute.

CHARLIE

Thank you.

CHARLIE kisses TRISTAN on the cheek, grudgingly. TRISTAN looks overjoyed.

(CONTINUED)

TRISTAN

We can have sex tonight, if you want.

CHARLIE

Can we close our eyes?

TRISTAN

No.

CHARLIE

Fuck.

TRISTAN

Last time I closed my eyes around you, I got a concussion.

CHARLIE laughs.

CHARLIE

So worth it.

Fade out.