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Dramatic Publishing

FAMILY TREE

A One-act Play

by

EMILY DENDINGER



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois

FAMILY TREE

A One-act Play
For 3 Women

CHARACTERS

HARPER. the grandmother

KATE the mother

AUGUST the daughter

FAMILY TREE

(The scene opens in a living room and kitchenette. There is a doorway leading to the upstairs and another leading into the hallway, where the front door is located. A table is center stage with four chairs, littered with the morning's newspaper, books and notepads. There is a rocking chair and a window. Lace curtains cover the window.

AUGUST, a tall, fifteen-year-old girl, enters. She has a rather incomplete family tree. She sits down at the table with the family tree and the books in front of her. She writes something down with a pencil. Opera blares from somewhere else in the house. A shrill female voice is singing along. HARPER suddenly bursts into the room, right in synch with the crescendo of the song.)

HARPER. Uncle Hermie! I thought of it...

AUGUST. Too late. Already got him...

HARPER. Oh, well...how's it coming?

AUGUST. It's going fine, except for this part here. *(She points to two large question marks on the tree.)*

HARPER. Well, what's the problem?

AUGUST. I can't leave these as question marks...

HARPER. Well, just make something up...

AUGUST. I can't just make up relatives I don't have!

HARPER. Sure you can.

AUGUST. All right, fine then. Frank Smith it is...

HARPER. Oh, no, honey, not Smith...

AUGUST. What's wrong with Smith?

HARPER. Only that there are more than about four million of them in this world...

AUGUST. That many?

HARPER. There must be enough to at least fill up the state of Connecticut...

AUGUST. Connecticut is bigger than you think it is...

HARPER. Well, at the very least Rhode Island...it's nearly six million.

AUGUST. I think you're lying. There's no way it can be that many. That's probably more like Tennessee or Wisconsin...

HARPER. I didn't say how many people *lived* in the state. I meant how many people could *fit* in the state.

AUGUST. Whatever. What time is it?

HARPER. Nearly four. She'll be home soon.

AUGUST. Okay.

HARPER. It's permanent you know...

AUGUST. I know.

HARPER. I think she means it though.

AUGUST. She won't last the night, guarantee...whenever she goes out with what's-his-face tonight, bang, that'll be it...she'll be gone by dinnertime tomorrow...

HARPER. Are you taking bets on this?

AUGUST. I don't have to. She's got a decent enough track record, Grandma.

HARPER. Well, maybe it'll be different this time.

AUGUST. Let's hope not. If she stays, I'll have to go.

HARPER. August, it isn't that bad...

AUGUST. You think I'm joking, but really, if she stays, I'm gone...

HARPER. Oh, darling, stop with the melodramatics and work on your project.

(The door opens. Enter KATE with a shopping bag.)

KATE. How can Marge keep expecting me to pick up all her extra shifts, and it's getting ridiculous. She can't possibly expect me to work the night hours. I'm still a new employee. Doesn't that count for anything? Did Pat call, Harper?

HARPER. That wasn't one of them...was it?

AUGUST. No. Not since I've been home.

HARPER. Then...no...I think.

KATE. Oh, well...no big deal. He was a terrible bore. All he talked about were his schnauzers. I loathe dogs.
(Stops and looks around at the clutter on the table.)
What's all this?

HARPER. August's history project.

KATE. Is it a collage?

AUGUST. It's a family tree.

KATE. Oh, it's very nice. Very colorful.

AUGUST. Thanks.

KATE. Are all these books research on our family?

AUGUST. No. There isn't that much to research.

KATE. Oh. Well. Anyway. What was I talking about? Oh, right. Pat and his dogs. *(Counting out money.)* Seventy-two...seventy-three...did you know that you can combine any two species of dogs together in a petri dish and get a dog? And that's what Pat had to say over dessert. Fascinating stuff.

HARPER. When I was a girl we had a dog, a schnauzer, I think...his name was Murray and my brother, Chuck... Uncle Chuck. Oh, make sure he's on there, August—

AUGUST. Already got him.

HARPER. Used to put him on a footstool with wheels and give him a good push and...wheee! He was off to sea... oh, he was a great dog...he died just before you were born, Kate... *(The phone rings. KATE leaps up and grabs it.)*

KATE. Hello! This is Kate...what? Oh...August? Why, of course...she's right here...one moment please... *(AUGUST sighs and answers the phone.)* It was a boy...calling for August?

AUGUST *(overlapping)*. Hello...hi...fine...

KATE *(overlapping)*. A boy...was calling for...August...

AUGUST *(overlapping)*. When?... I don't know...I guess so...nothing...yeah, I don't know...I need to finish the...yeah...can I call you right back?

HARPER *(overlapping)*. Yes, I suppose that happens sometime.

KATE. Wait...what did she just say? Did you...did you just hear that? *(AUGUST hangs up the phone.)* Did you just tell him you'd...call him back?

HARPER. Who was it?

AUGUST. Erik. From chemistry.

HARPER. Do I know him?

AUGUST. Science fair.

HARPER. Right.

KATE. Are you going to?

AUGUST. Am I going to what?

KATE. Call him back?

AUGUST. Well. Yes. Why not?

HARPER. What should we have for supper?

KATE. August, honey. You don't call *men* back. Never ever. First rule. Ever.

AUGUST. Kate. He's just a friend. Don't worry about it.

HARPER. I have chicken thawing...or let's make a roast, shall we?

KATE. Oh, they are *all just friends...* (*AUGUST picks up her book and begins thumbing through.*) Well. What did he say?

AUGUST. He wants me to go with him to some Harvest Dance at the school.

KATE. When's that?

AUGUST. Tonight.

KATE. Tonight? You mean...tonight?

AUGUST. No, the tonight being yesterday night. Yes, tonight.

KATE. He could have given you a little more warning, couldn't he?

AUGUST. He asked me about it a while ago. I just forgot, I guess...

KATE. Well...you're going, aren't you?

HARPER. Spaghetti! Let's do Italian tonight!

KATE. What? You aren't?

AUGUST. I didn't say that. I didn't say anything. I don't know. I have a lot of work to do.

KATE. When is that due?

AUGUST. Monday.

KATE. You have all weekend...

AUGUST. I hate procrastinating.

KATE. I could help you.

AUGUST. I don't really need any help.

KATE. Well you should go. It might be fun.