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Dramatic Publishing

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Augusta

Comedy by Richard Dresser

"A thought-provoking premise, a social conscience, and a lot of funny lines." (*Boston Globe*)



Augusta

Comedy. By Richard Dresser. *Cast: 1m., 2w.* Molly, middle-aged, has parlayed many years of experience at a national cleaning company to become team leader, which provides her with just enough money to keep her head above water. Claire, young, pretty and hopeful, is the newest—and only—member of Molly's team. Despite their differences, they become friends as they clean houses for summer people on the coast of Maine. But their world is rocked by the appearance of Jimmy, a new by-the-books boss, who is trapped in middle management and a desolate marriage. The company has moved him all over the country and now he's been assigned a job keeping things on track in this small coastal town. Claire, who recently graduated from high school, is sobered by the prospect of ending up like Molly. She dreams of moving up to management. There must be a better life out there for her if she could only find it. The desperately lonely Jimmy encourages Claire in her ambitions and pledges to help her any way he can. He is her mentor, but he'd like to be so much more. As the relationship between Claire and Jimmy deepens, Molly's position as team leader is threatened. And without that, she doesn't know how she can keep going. The delicate balance that has kept these three people together is suddenly shattered, resulting in a twisting, turning and surprising struggle for survival. After betrayals, power grabs and thorny moral dilemmas, Molly and Claire discover that their only hope for a better life lies in their friendship. *Unit set. Approximate running time: 90 minutes. Code: AC5.*

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AUGUSTA

By

RICHARD DRESSER



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“Originally produced at the Contemporary American Theater
Festival, Shepherdstown, West Virginia,
producing director Ed Herendeen.”

* * * *

The Contemporary American Theater Festival, Shepherdstown, W.V., originally produced *Augusta* in July 2006, producing director Ed Herendeen, directed by Lucie Tiberghien, with the following:

Jimmy ANDY PROSKY
Molly CAROLYN SWIFT
Claire KACI GOBER

PRODUCTION STAFF

Set Design SHAUN L. MOTLEY
Costume Design KATE TURNER-WALKER
Lighting Design COLIN K. BILLS

Sound Design TODD CAMPBELL
Stage Manager RICK CUNNINGHAM
Assistant Stage Manager. AUDRA L. ROBERSON
Casting by. PAT MCCORKLE C.S.A., KELLY GILLESPIE

Understudies . CHRIS BOYKIN, MOLLY CAMP, JJANA VALENTINER

Merrimack Repertory Theatre, Lowell, Mass., presented the New England premiere of *Augusta* in September 2006. The director/artistic director was Charles Towers, executive director was Tom Parrish. The production included the following:

Jimmy MARK SHANAHAN
Molly. KATHRYN ROSSETTER
Claire JAMIE PROCTOR

PRODUCTION STAFF

Scene Designer DAVID EVANS MORRIS
Costume Designer. DEBORAH NEWHALL
Lighting Designer JULIET CHIA
Sound Designer JAMIE WHOOLERY
Stage Manager EMILY F. MCMULLEN
Assistant Stage Manager ADAM C. SCARANO
Casting Director. HARRIET BASS
Scenic Artist JULIANNE TAVARES
Run Crew JOSH DENNIS

AUGUSTA

CHARACTERS

JIMMY 35-45

MOLLY 40-50

CLAIRE. early 20s

SETTING

The play is set in Maine.

The time is the present.

AUGUSTA

ONE

(JIMMY'S OFFICE. JIMMY is at his desk. MOLLY, in the middle of her life, is in the chair.)

JIMMY. Did you like Tom?

MOLLY. Sorry?

JIMMY. Tom. Tommy. The T-Man. My predecessor. Did you like him?

MOLLY. We got along fine.

JIMMY. We only met three times and all three times he was wearing the same clothes. Not my way, but to each his own. So you liked him?

MOLLY. Yes.

JIMMY. That's what I hear. He couldn't say enough nice things about you. And here you are, stuck with the likes of me.

MOLLY. I'm not stuck. Things happen for a purpose.

JIMMY. Positive attitude. Bravo! That's what Tommy said about you. But they didn't move me up here for my health. I'm sitting in this chair because of the problems. Do you think Tommy saw the problems and didn't know how to fix them? Or were they simply not problems in Tommy's twisted little world, where clothes never need to be changed?

MOLLY. What are these problems?

JIMMY. Please. Today is not about problems. Today is about new beginnings. I want you to be happy. I want you to feel the same way about me as you did about Tommy. Can you do that?

MOLLY. I can try.

JIMMY. Did you enjoy being team leader?

MOLLY. Yes, I did.

JIMMY. There's the responsibility and let's not lie, there's the bonus. We all need to feel the jingle-jangle of coin-age dancing in our pockets, don't we?

MOLLY. We sure do.

JIMMY. Now some people sitting in this chair would say, Molly, I don't know you from Adam—or Eve—so why should I make you team leader?

MOLLY. Well, I have the experience—

JIMMY. Stop. I'm not one of those people. I just want you to tell me that you should be team leader.

MOLLY. You just want me to say it?

JIMMY. If you can't say those...five words then how can you do the job?

MOLLY. I should be team leader.

JIMMY. Nicely done. You're team leader.

MOLLY. Thank you.

JIMMY. Don't thank me, it's what you've done. Built yourself a glowing reputation over the passage of time. Which reminds me, I haven't even had time to put up my awards. Before I release you, Molly, is there anything I should know?

MOLLY. About what?

JIMMY. This current situation we find ourselves in.

MOLLY. I don't know what you mean. I don't know what the problems are that you're going to fix.

JIMMY. I'm not going to fix anything. I'll say it again.

I'm not going to fix anything.

MOLLY. All right.

JIMMY. Working together, we will face challenges. We won't dwell on problems, we'll fixate on solutions. Are you with me?

MOLLY. Yes, I am.

JIMMY. Jimmy.

MOLLY. Jimmy.

JIMMY. I'm busy, you're busy, everyone's busy. So these moments of being nakedly human are all too rare. I want to make sure you won't get out to the street and kick yourself because there's something you didn't tell your new friend Jimmy.

MOLLY. I just don't know what you're after.

JIMMY. Is there anything you'd tell Tommy, you and Tommy with the back and forth, the late nights, the drinks, the trust—

MOLLY. Jimmy—

JIMMY. I don't know, I'm new here. Nothing?

MOLLY. Nothing.

JIMMY. I can't tell you what a pleasure it is getting to know you, Molly. To connect a face with some of the crazy stories I've heard. I sense things about you. Things I grew to appreciate in my own mother, but, sadly, only in retrospect, when she was gone from this good earth.

MOLLY. I remind you of your mother?

JIMMY. Without the demented shrieking. This office is a sanctuary. What is said in this office—well, no promises on that score. But you can always tell me the kinds of things that will eat you up from the inside if you sit on

them. I've spent more time than I intended with you but overall, well worth it.

MOLLY. Thanks.

JIMMY. Jimmy.

MOLLY. Jimmy. (*MOLLY leaves. JIMMY gets out a box, from which he gets his various awards.*)

TWO

(*TOWNSEND RESIDENCE, a well-appointed summer house. MOLLY is carefully laying out cleaning supplies, buckets, mops. A melodic doorbell.*)

MOLLY (*calls*). It's open!

(*CLAIRE enters from the hall. She's young and pretty.*)

CLAIRE. Hi. Molly?

MOLLY. You're Claire?

CLAIRE. Wow. I always wondered what the inside of this house looked like. It's awesome. Can you imagine actually living here? I'd sleep in a different bed every night. When one room got rancid I'd just move to the next one.

MOLLY. We start at eight.

CLAIRE. I know, I'm not exactly a morning person.

MOLLY. Oh, I'm sorry. What time would you like to start?

CLAIRE. Like around ten would be amazing.

MOLLY. Okay, from now on we'll start around ten.

CLAIRE. Really? You are the best, Molly. We're going to get along great!

MOLLY. Look. Claire. This is a real job. We start at eight. If that's going to be a problem then you need to tell me now.

CLAIRE. Oh, so that was like an early morning goof? No, it's cool. I'll be dragging my ass till noon but I'll make up for it after lunch when I'm awake.

MOLLY. Is that what you want me to put in my report? "Drags ass till noon"?

CLAIRE. What report?

MOLLY. I thought you knew. I'm the team leader.

CLAIRE. Where's the rest of the team?

MOLLY. Teams range from two up to a total of six for the big estates.

CLAIRE. So I'm like the whole team? I thought there'd be other people to hang with.

MOLLY. We're not here to hang. We start here in this room and move through the house. As a team. I dust high, you dust low. Create a space like this and move around the room, so you always know what you've done. (*MOLLY demonstrates proper cleaning technique.*)

CLAIRE. I guess it'd be pretty easy to just space out, clean the same place three times and miss the rest of the house. Like trying to make dinner when you're drunk.

MOLLY. You do the floors. (*MOLLY and CLAIRE start to work.*)

CLAIRE. Question. How clean does it have to be?

MOLLY. You should clean as if it's your own house.

CLAIRE. In that case we are so done we should make hash brownies and fire up the tube.

MOLLY. You don't want to be here, do you?

CLAIRE. I wouldn't have gotten up early if I didn't want to be here!

MOLLY. Just so you know, every week there are lots and lots of women who apply to the company. If you don't work out then you'll make someone else happy.

CLAIRE. I know that. I spent the last five months trying to find a job. Everybody wants experience, and what is with all these drug tests, anyway? All of a sudden everything's a crime. They just beat you down and make sure there's absolutely no way you can get some kind of dead-end suck-ass job you'd kill yourself if you ever got. (*Pause.*) Did Jimmy happen to mention how I did on the test?

MOLLY. No, he didn't.

CLAIRE. I did very well. High school was just a nightmare, I mean it was so not worth my time. I just sleepwalked through except for the girl-fights but I really nailed the test. Even when I was taking it I thought, yeah, I own this test. I never felt that before.

MOLLY. I'm very happy for you. (*They clean in silence.*)

CLAIRE. How did you do on the test, Molly?

MOLLY. I don't remember.

CLAIRE. Sure you don't.

MOLLY. It was six years ago.

CLAIRE. Was it better than a 94?

MOLLY. I don't remember.

CLAIRE. I don't think it was better than a 94 because Jimmy said that of everyone who took the test in the whole country I was in the top something. There are days when your whole life changes. Like the day I met Kevin and fell in love. I realized I'm not just some dim-wit, slutty, small-town girl with no hope of becoming

anything but old and bitter—sorry, nothing personal.
There are things I can do.

MOLLY (*examines where CLAIRE dusted*). I'll take your word for it. Why don't you start with the floor?

CLAIRE. Where's the mop?

MOLLY. The company advertises that floors are cleaned on hands and knees.

CLAIRE. Why? So we can feel like slaves? Why don't they make us lick it with our tongues?

MOLLY. Cleaning on hands and knees is what the company calls a Golden Guarantee to the client. It's our job to honor that.

CLAIRE. Who will ever know?

MOLLY. We'll know. We'll have violated the Golden Guarantee. As team leader, I'm only as good as the report I write.

CLAIRE (*gets on hands and knees*). So what floors are you going to do?

MOLLY. I won't be doing any floors.

CLAIRE. Oh, that's fair!

MOLLY. That's just the way it is.

CLAIRE. Why don't you have to do floors?

MOLLY. My back goes out. Okay? And I can't afford the pills to kill the pain. I've been doing this a long time, Claire. I just can't get down on my hands and knees.

CLAIRE. Does that go in your report? "Doesn't do floors"?

MOLLY. From now on, anything you say about my report will go in my report. Is that understood? (*They work in silence. CLAIRE stops.*)

CLAIRE. Molly? Honest to God, how have you stood it so long?

MOLLY. I'm one of the lucky ones. They made me team leader, I get a bonus. So now I can't afford to leave, even if I wanted to.

CLAIRE. How much do you make?

MOLLY. It's against the law to talk about what we get paid.

CLAIRE. It's against the law? What are they going to do, put us in Gossip Jail?

MOLLY. Company rules.

CLAIRE. What difference does it make?

MOLLY. It might kill your spirit if you knew how much I make.

CLAIRE. Is it over ten dollars an hour?

MOLLY. Let's just say I'm doing pretty well.

CLAIRE. Well I was hoping for more. I know girls working fast food making more than me. And they go into the big freezers and do shots. They spit in the salad. They moon customers in the drive-thru lane.

MOLLY. I really should try that place.

CLAIRE. The point is, they are like felons in the workplace and they make more money than I do.

MOLLY. Well, you're not even making minimum wage.

CLAIRE. How do you know?

MOLLY. Because I happen to know you're in the training program.

CLAIRE. So you know how much I make but I don't know how much you make?

MOLLY. Look at it like this: if you work hard and make team leader some day you'll make over ten dollars an hour. Actually, over eleven.

CLAIRE. Good for you.

MOLLY. Thanks. I've done the time.

CLAIRE. What I don't understand is how it's possible to make less than the minimum.

MOLLY. Because you're in the training program.

CLAIRE. But doesn't "minimum" mean the least? How is it possible to make less than the least? It would be like making more than the most. Or being bigger than the largest. It's insane.

MOLLY. I don't know if you're really cut out for this kind of work.

CLAIRE. I'm tougher than you think. I've beat up girls about twice as big as you. This is not a threat but I could easily wreck your face. I'd punch you in the stomach and kick you in the jaw on your way down.

MOLLY. That's a good plan. It's also good if you can turn your mind off for long periods of time.

CLAIRE. I'm not turning my mind off. I'm just getting started.

MOLLY. I'm telling you how I get by. So maybe it will help you.

CLAIRE. Look, I shouldn't even tell you this.

MOLLY. What?

CLAIRE. Well, once Kevin gets going, I won't even be working here anymore. I'll be doing something totally different.

MOLLY. Like what?

CLAIRE. Like I don't know yet. But it's going to surprise a lot of people who thought I was going nowhere. Which reminds me, could I use the telephone?

MOLLY. You want to use Mrs. Townsend's telephone?

CLAIRE. It's really kind of important.

MOLLY. We are strictly prohibited from touching anything that belongs to the client except to clean it. Also, just so

you know, there's no making loud noise. Or talking to the client unless talked to first. And no eating.

CLAIRE. No eating? Goddamn it! That's like my third favorite thing in the whole world!

MOLLY. So forget the phone.

CLAIRE. Kevin's getting a job today. I want to call him.

MOLLY. What kind of job?

CLAIRE. Sporting goods. Before he went into the service he was the best linebacker in school history, easy. Now that he's out, they want to start him in sales and then have him be district manager and stuff. It's pretty sweet.

MOLLY. So he's already got the job?

CLAIRE. He just has to talk to this one last guy. Which is today.

MOLLY. So he doesn't actually have the job.

CLAIRE. It's ninety-nine percent.

MOLLY. Oh boy. I don't like those odds.

CLAIRE. You don't like ninety-nine percent?

MOLLY. Every time anything in my life has been ninety-nine percent it hasn't happened.

CLAIRE. You know, you are one giant black cloud. Well if it never happens then it couldn't have been ninety-nine percent in the first place. Ninety-nine percent means it's practically in the bag.

MOLLY. Me and my husband were ninety-nine percent sure of getting a really neat apartment and then it fell through and we ended up in this dump. And we can't afford one penny more than we're paying.

CLAIRE. What do you pay?

MOLLY. Well...

CLAIRE. Hey, there's no rule against discussing rent, is there?