

# RE-SOURCING

*Laura Shamas*

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Laura Shamas is a playwright, author, screenwriter, and mythologist. Born in Oklahoma, her credits include productions at: Golden Thread Productions, Victory Theater, West Coast Ensemble, The Glines (N Y C), Walnut Street Theater, Studio Arena, Philadelphia Theater Center, and Denver Center Theater Company. Some workshops/readings of her work were presented by: Native Voices at the Autry, Native Earth Performing Arts; "Playwrights Week", Lark Theater, New York; Soho Theatre (London); Williamstown Theater Festival; The Old Globe; The Geva Theater; and The Utah Shakespearean Festival. Some of her other produced plays are: MOLIÈRE IN LOVE, PISTACHIO STORIES, UP TO DATE, LADY-LIKE, PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK, PORTRAIT OF A NUDE and THE OTHER SHAKESPEARE. Among her playwriting awards: a Fringe First Award for Outstanding New Drama (Edinburgh), a *Drama-Logue* Award, a Marquee Award, and a 2006-2007 Aurand Harris Fellowship from the Children's Theater Foundation of America.

## CHARACTERS & SETTING

DAUBNEY, *male, Ameriblaze supervisor, thirty-five-ish*  
JIMMIE ALICE, *female, Ameriblaze worker, late twenty-ish*  
REECE, *male, Ameriblaze worker, African American,  
thirty-forty-ish*  
MELBA, *female, Ameriblaze worker, forty-ish*  
VIJAY, *male, Indian-American, thirty-forty-ish*  
SELENA, *female, V P of Ameriblaze, thirty-forty-ish*

*Ethnicities open for all characters except REECE and VIJAY.*

*Time: Right now*

*Place: Paris, Arkansas and Houston, Texas*

*Settings: In a call center, in a bar, in a living room,  
in a diner, on the street, in an office, in a restaurant, etc.  
Area staging.*

*Ninety minutes, no intermission.*

RE-SOURCING was originally produced by John Halbert and Mapala Productions at the Noho Arts Center, Los Angeles, California, from 15 October to 21 November 2004. The cast and creative contributors were:

DAUBNEY ..... Paul Kouri  
JIMMIE ALICE ..... Corrina Lyons  
REECE ..... K J Middlebrooks  
MELBA ..... Andi Matheny  
VIJAY ..... Ravi Kapoor  
SELENA ..... Margot Foley  
*Understudies* ..... Subhash Mandal & Erwin Stone

*Director* ..... Jules Aaron  
*Assistant director* ..... Subhash Mandal  
*Production stage manager* ..... Andrea Covell

The play was developed further at Williamstown Theater Festival, July 2006 (Reading Series).

For my friend Jules Aaron,  
whose direction of three of my plays  
(including this one),  
has meant the world to me

## Scene One

*(As the lights come up, four people sit at a phone bank linked to computer screens, near center stage, wearing headsets. They sit in this order: DAUBNEY, MELBA, REECE and JIMMIE ALICE. The phones are incredibly active, and light up like crazy. Note: Some of the lines on pages 1-2 should be overlapped in this way: wherever the hyphen exists in the line above, ie, the next actor should start speaking his or her line.)*

DAUBNEY: Ameriblaze. America's hottest software provider. Can I help—you?

MELBA: Ameriblaze. America's hottest—software provider. Can I help you?

REECE: Ameriblaze—America's hottest software provider.

JIMMIE ALICE: Ameriblaze—

DAUBNEY: Ameriblaze software is compatible with Airport Extreme Base Station—

MELBA: Ameriblaze—

REECE: Ameriblaze—

JIMMIE ALICE: —Officially we aren't supposed to get into that, but off the record, it's your lucky day because I actually know how to fix that—problem.

MELBA: Click "Internet Connection". Now select T C P Script—

DAUBNEY: Ameriblaze—

REECE: You're going to need to reboot. Be sure to hold down the option key while—yeah, you're doing it.

JIMMIE ALICE: Ameriblaze—America’s hottest software provider.

MELBA: No. That was T C P Script, not P C P Script. Keep scrolling—T as in Tom, not P as in Pie.

REECE: Ameriblaze—

DAUBNEY: Hit the return key. You’re almost done.

DAUBNEY: Ameriblaze—

JIMMIE ALICE: Thanks for calling Ameriblaze—

REECE: Thanks for calling Ameriblaze—

MELBA: Thanks for calling Ameriblaze—

DAUBNEY: And thank you for calling Ameriblaze.

*(Suddenly, it is quiet for ten to twenty seconds: The phones do not light up. Then, the four look at each other, as if to say, “What’s wrong?” Each start to adjust their computer screens.)*

DAUBNEY: Now what? The frickin’ system’s down?

REECE: My screen’s dead.

JIMMIE ALICE: Mine, too.

MELBA: Ditto.

*(DAUBNEY stands up and bangs on a screen. Then, strangely, from directly above, six pink envelopes fall, and land in front of each of them. One by one, with trepidation, they slowly take their headsets off, and open the pink envelopes. Together, they gasp, then scream. The other two unopened envelopes lie to the side.)*

DAUBNEY, JIMMIE ALICE, REECE & MELBA: Ahhhhhhh!

*(Then, they hold up the pink slips of paper that were in the envelopes, reading the fine print.)*

DAUBNEY: Holy F-in’ mackerel.

MELBA: Oh my god.

JIMMIE ALICE: Oh my god.

REECE: Am I readin' this right? (*Holds it close*)

DAUBNEY: They can't do this! They can't just frickin' do this.

MELBA: No notice. Thirty days of severance! I got two kids to support.

JIMMIE ALICE: Oh my god.

REECE: Oh, man. My chest is tight. (*He sits and takes deep breaths.*)

DAUBNEY: (*Throws headset down*) Damn it. It can't happen to us. It just can't.

MELBA: That V P Hodson didn't have the nerve to tell us herself. And she was just here.

REECE: And we all kissed her ass. (*He takes a few more deep breaths.*)

MELBA: The bitch...

DAUBNEY: (*Putting it together*) Yeah, she must have known. That's why she came all the way up here....

JIMMIE ALICE: Oh my god. (*To REECE*) You havin' an attack?

REECE: (*Shaking his head "no"*) I got rent to pay.

DAUBNEY: We all got rent to pay, man. What'll I tell the wife—

MELBA: Shit. There's two extra slips here addressed to Sam and Juanita.

JIMMIE ALICE: This news'll ruin their vacations. They'll be comin' back to nothin'!

REECE: Whew-oo. (*Lets out a gasp of air*) This is it, then. (*Moves away from phone bank, picks up jacket from his chair.*) Time to walk away, folks. This is the big goodbye.

DAUBNEY: Can they do this? Can they just *do* this?

MELBA: (*Shaking her head*) They're doin' it, sugar cheeks. Big time. Can't believe it. Can't believe it. (*Grabs her purse, lights a cigarette.*)

JIMMIE ALICE: They *can* do it. They *are* doin' it. (*She starts to put on a coat on the back of her chair. She looks like she's going to cry.*)

DAUBNEY: Well, what are we gonna do 'bout it?

REECE: What do you mean, "do"? We can't do a thing. They're undoin' us, Daub.

DAUBNEY: Come on. I mean, are we men or what?

(*MELBA gestures to JIMMIE ALICE and then back to herself.*)

MELBA: (*Puffing on cig*) We're "or what," 'case you hadn't noticed.

DAUBNEY: I mean, are we meek human beings or are we fighters? Are we mice or are we Americans?

REECE: I'm not in the mood for twenty questions. I gotta go find a new job. I got a mother to support.

(*REECE gathers up more of his belongings. JIMMIE ALICE stops.*)

JIMMIE ALICE: I—I—I'm an American, Daubney. (*She bursts into tears.*)

MELBA: Who're you plannin' to fight, Mister Rabble Rouser? (*Comforts JIMMIE ALICE*) Honey, you're gonna be okay. You are....It's just a shock. This your first time? The first pink slip's always the worst.

DAUBNEY: Well, not that I believe in workin' with the gavel-thumpers and ambulance chasers. But surely there's a lawsuit here. I mean, the big shots at Ameriblasé can't just frickin' *outsource* us out of the blue like this, and get away with it. Were any of you

“not-i-fied” that we were “performin’ poorly”?  
They told me the opposite.

REECE: Yeah, you had a rocket in your pocket.  
That’s why they made you Supervisor and told  
you everything.

DAUBNEY: I was on track to move up to V P.

REECE: And you’re tellin’ us for real that you weren’t  
in this loop? And that you didn’t know the axe was  
comin’?

DAUBNEY: No F-in’ way.

REECE: Right. For all I know, you could be off to  
Houston tomorrow for a big fat job at headquarters.

DAUBNEY: No. I’m not. I’ll be back on the street lookin’  
for a job, like y’all. And I’m real pissed off about it.

REECE: Yeah? I’d like to think you didn’t sell us out.

DAUBNEY: I didn’t. I swear.

(JIMMIE ALICE *wails again.*)

MELBA: Jimmie Alice. Honey. You okay?

JIMMIE ALICE: (*Dabbing eyes*) No. No, I’m not okay.  
This job is my whole—was my whole life. Well, almost...  
I do still have the book group.

DAUBNEY: Okay, okay. Listen, let’s all go out for a drink  
or something. We can’t say goodbye like this.

REECE: A drink? Now? (*Looks at his watch*) It’s two-thirty.

DAUBNEY: I’d say our shift is officially over. I’ll buy.

REECE: (*Suspiciously*) You’ve never done that before.  
Now that you’re out of a job, you’re gonna buy us all  
a drink?

DAUBNEY: Okay, so I never got it together as Supervisor to help us socialize. At least I can make sure we wallow like hogs in misery together here at the end.

MELBA: (*Flirty*) Hell, I ain't had a drink with you since the Christmas party, Daub.

DAUBNEY: Well then? For old time's sake?

REECE: Okay. One drink. Just 'cause I'm worried about her. (*Indicates JIMMIE ALICE*)

(*JIMMIE ALICE wails again. REECE puts his arm around her, comforting her. Blackout*)

## Scene Two

(*Lights fade up on the four of them in a bar, stage left. They sit on stools. All are tipsy. A faintly raucous yet trendy country western bar song plays in the background. They sip drinks at various times throughout the scene.*)

DAUBNEY: And that's how they did it on *Friends*. They all stuck together. They shoved it to N B C.

REECE: Man, you're missin' a big link. They were negotiatin' jobs that they still *had*. They were big T V stars.

JIMMIE ALICE: (*Slurs speech*) David Schwimmer was not a big star then. Not in '95.

REECE: But we're not negotiatin.' We're fired. The reason that so-called "elimination reality shows" are so popular is that in this economy, more and more Americans are gettin' sacked...

MELBA: I like the idea of stickin' together with you, Daub. I like it a lot. (*Quietly*) Are you and Karen still talkin' 'bout a separation?

(MELBA *winks at* DAUBNEY. *He moves his stool away from her slightly.*)

DAUBNEY: No comment. And maybe you should hold up on the 'ritas, Mel.

(DAUBNEY's *response irritates* MELBA, *and she scoots away from him.*)

JIMMIE ALICE: Where did our jobs go? They were outsourced, but to where? Texas? New Mexico? Mexico?

REECE: (*Shrugs*) Dunno. Don't care.

JIMMIE ALICE: Why don't we try to find 'em?

DAUBNEY: They went to India, of course. Prolly to Bangalore. Or New Del high.

REECE: Yeah, so now when they call for customer service, they'll get someone who says (*Imitates Indian accent*): "Since when are you having this problem?"

DAUBNEY: Hey, not bad, dude.

REECE: They try to train 'em to sound American. Sometimes, they make the folks losin' the jobs train their replacements. We're lucky we didn't have to go through that.

DAUBNEY: Yeah, my replacement got real lucky 'cause right now, I'd like to kill him. Or her. Whoever or wherever they are.

JIMMIE ALICE: Reece, hey, I saw somethin' 'bout that on P B S. They take classes in American culture and all. They try to U S-ize 'em to sound more like us on the phone. They make 'em go watch a lot of American movies and sitcoms.

DAUBNEY: (*Snorting*) P B S! That's for liberal wackos.

MELBA: Once I called in an airline reservation to American Airlines, and the guy who took my order was in prison, in Oregon.

REECE: Always a comfort to give your credit card number to a convict, isn't it?

MELBA: They still outsource lots of cheap labor jobs to prisons...I think I'd rather my job'd gone to someone in prison. At least it would've kept it in the country.

JIMMIE ALICE: Except...that it gives a job to a convicted criminal...

DAUBNEY: But at least the criminal is a real American.

REECE: A telemarketer for A T & T called me the other day. I asked her where she was calling from, and she said (*Uses Indian accent*): "Fairfax, Virginia." Riiiiight. At least the corporations could let 'em all tell the truth. (*Takes a drink*)

JIMMIE ALICE: On the P B S special, it showed how they teach 'em down home chitchat. They learn the "American idiom". They explain slang, like "Stop yankin' my chain". And "Give me a ballpark figure".

DAUBNEY: What numbnuts. Like you can learn to speak American.

JIMMIE ALICE: They upload web sites with tons of info, like how hot it is that day in whatever town you're callin' from.

DAUBNEY: Wait. Wait! (*A quick beat*) That's it. You're brilliant, Reece and Jimmie A. (*He stands up and embraces REECE.*) Props to you, dude.

REECE: Whoa, hey guy. We're not that close or that wasted....

JIMMIE ALICE: What'd I say?

DAUBNEY: Y'all have just come up with our plan of attack.

REECE: What?

JIMMIE ALICE: What?

MELBA: What?

DAUBNEY: We're going to get our old jobs back.

REECE: How?

DAUBNEY: (*Standing up*) We are going stay right here and pretend to be Indian.

(*A beat*)

JIMMIE ALICE: Huh?

MELBA: I am part Indian. Check the official rolls. My grandfather was part Choctaw from Oklahoma.

REECE: Me, too. I got some Cherokee on my mom's—

DAUBNEY: No, no. Listen. We are going to pretend to be from *India*. The country, as in somewhere near Pakistan. We're gonna to band together and fool some big fat cat company—maybe ole Ameriblasé herself (*Holds up his pink slip*)—into hirin' us to work their phone centers.

REECE: (*Shaking head*) Daub, take two aspirins and call us in the morning.

DAUBNEY: Mister, I'm as churned up as a June twister, and I'm not going to sit and take this B S. I'm gonna protest! Think of what it'll do to this town to go through another shutdown. It'll be death. They closed the railways and the mines last century. Now they're tryin' to slam us again by closin' this call center? I'm gonna do the American thing and *stop them*. We can't let 'em get away with it. Let's *protest!*

JIMMIE ALICE: You? Protest?

REECE: Now how'll that possibly work? The head honchos at Ameriblasé (*Refers to pink slip*) know us. They sure as hell know you, the ex-Super. They know we're not in Bangalore.

DAUBNEY: See, here's the beauty of it. We'll...we'll... (*A pause, then divine inspiration*) hire someone who is

Indian-American to act as our front man! He goes to Houston and sweet-talks Hodson, tells her we're in Bangalore. They ain't gonna fly out to Bangalore to check on the facilities. Trust me. They're too cheap for that. They'll take us based on his pitch, and some dummied photos of a call center. Whatever. They'll never actually see us. This guy agrees to keep our secret, somehow, for some reason, I dunno why—prolly money—we'll work that out later. And then we won't need new jobs! We can stay here and keep our lives same as before as we *protest this outrageous act of corporate F-in' malfeasance*—

JIMMIE ALICE: New jobs don't exist any way, no matter what the administration says. They've all been outsourced and outmoded, and none are comin' back—

DAUBNEY: And *voilà*, we've pulled off the ultimate twenty-first century corporate revenge shaft plan.

MELBA: (*Applauds*) Woo-hoo! I like the sound of that. Those Ameribastards. They deserve it.

REECE: Wait, wait, wait. First of all, we'd have to take a pay cut in order to get our jobs back. That's the reason we got tossed. Workers in India'll do it for a third of our salaries. One third of our pay is big money there.

JIMMIE ALICE: That's fine. That's fine. I'll do triple overtime. I don't mind. This job's my life. Y'all are my life. Almost. Viva Les Proletariats!

MELBA: Hey. You know...We could forward some of the phone lines so they could be answered from our homes...The calls come in cycles. We could alternate late night shifts, if we had to, so no one person always has to handle all the late calls...

JIMMIE ALICE: Hey, we can run a fake call center from my house, since I live alone.

REECE: Whoa. Hey. Do the math, folks. Three times the work? Don't tell me you're actually considerin' this, Mel?

MELBA: Well, what do we have to lose? Towns all over the country are just closin' up due to this outsourcing biz. Places like Clintwood and Brownsville. I been readin' about it but I never thought it'd happen right here in Paris.

JIMMIE ALICE: Me neither.

MELBA: I don't wanna uproot. I love this town. My kids love it. All three of my exes live here. And this idea is...well, it's crazy all right. But it feels better than just gettin' canned and doin' nothin'. No one posts any Paris, Arkansas jobs on Craigslist, right? And bein' American means takin' crazy action, right?

JIMMIE ALICE: Two hundred and somethin' years ago, dumpin' Indian tea outta ships in Boston was crazy, too. Right? Right?

REECE: Okay, fine. Let's skip the logistics for a moment. How'll you possibly find someone who'll risk doing this, someone who'll pretend to represent us? Why would anyone in his right mind do that, and keep it a secret? It's stupid.

*(A beat)*

JIMMIE ALICE: *(Tippy)* I don't know. We need a certain political operative type. I might have a way to find someone.

REECE: You?

DAUBNEY: How?

JIMMIE ALICE: Well, some nights, I hang out in the Arkansas Underground Chat Room online. Okay, every night. I post ads in there tryin' to get people for my political book group.

REECE: Oh. It's a *political* book group. I thought it was just a book group. I mighta wanted to join that. Shoulda told me.

JIMMIE ALICE: Yes, it's a political book group. My dream's to be featured on one of those liberal radio networks for startin' it. I never knew y'all well enough to go into it before. I thought I'd get fired if I discussed politics in the workplace. I mean, since the Patriot Act, I've been afraid to speak my mind anywhere except the 'net.... Actually, I've been kinda scared to *think*, too, in case the Attorney General and his fascist truth squad can mind-read. Anyway, I could post in the chat room asking specifically for an India-American expert. Someone really great might turn up. The 'net has a broad reach.

MELBA: Oh, what're the odds? We're in Paris.

DAUBNEY: It's cool. You might as well try. Someone might be willin' to drive in from Fort Smith.

REECE: (*Shaking head*) Y'all are too drunk to think straight. Thank God Sam and Juanita're gone for two weeks or he'd be hoarse by now and she'd be foamin' at the mouth from screamin'.

MELBA: Look. If anybody responds to the ad, I'm in. (*Raises her hand*)

JIMMIE ALICE (*Raises hand*) In.

DAUBNEY: (*Raises hand*) In.

REECE: Out.

DAUBNEY: Out? You and Jimmie frickin' thought of this.

REECE: No. *You* thought of it, Daub. You always try to pin your own bad ideas on others. Did they teach you that in management school? I said a few English words with a bad Indian accent. Jimmie A. talked about P B S. Then *you* thought of this jackass plan. But you credited

it to us, tryin' to get us involved in a subconscious way, usin' psychological transference or whatever. This is a crazy, cockamamie idea, and tomorrow, when y'all're sober, you're gonna thank me for bein' the voice of reason in this pathetic situation. *Do not do this. Repeat. Do not do this.*

*(A beat)*

JIMMIE ALICE: Reece, does that mean you're really out or just sorta out?

REECE: Oh, Jimmie A, totally out. And y'all are totally out of it!

*(Blackout)*