

# Coming Back to Jersey

*by*

*Carl L. Williams*

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### **STORY OF THE PLAY**

Howard, a middle-aged tailor, indulges in daydreams to escape his humdrum existence. Norma, his suspicious wife, believes he is fantasizing about Dorothy, a sexy widow friend, so she comes up with a scheme to have Dorothy passionately flirt with Howard to test his fidelity. But Norma's plan backfires when Howard retaliates by conniving with Dorothy to turn the trick around.

Soon Norma is threatening divorce and conspiring with a widower in a romantic charade to make Howard jealous. When the mixed-up couples are spotted having intimate dinners for two by Howard and Norma's increasingly scandalized daughter and her straight-arrow boyfriend, it all leads to over-the-top assumptions and comedic accusations.

Will the couples manage to sort themselves out? Will Howard and Norma ever get back to being the couple they used to be?

AWARDS: Winner of the 2007 Brevard Little Theatre New Play Competition and the 2009 Cordell Green New Play Festival at CATS Playhouse in Lubbock, TX. Also one of six finalists in the 2008 Dayton FutureFest at Dayton Playhouse in Ohio, where it won the "Audience Favorite" award.

### **ORIGINAL PRODUCTION**

*Coming Back to Jersey* was originally produced in Brevard, NC, May 30-June 8, 2008 under the direction of Gene O'Hare. The cast was as follows:

*Howard Karchmer.....Joe Narsavage*  
*Norma Karchmer.....June Stacy*  
*Louise Karchmer.....Lynne Warner*  
*Freddy Zuckerman.....Andre Bell*  
*Dorothy Arnfield.....Christine Yaxley*  
*Sidney Hersch.....Douglas Huth*

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(3 m, 3 w)*

**HOWARD KARCHMER:** 40s-50s, Jewish tailor with an active imagination and wit.

**NORMA KARCHMER:** 40s-50s, his wife, a little dominating and suspicious.

**LOUISE KARCHMER:** 20s, their daughter, sweet, innocent, easily embarrassed.

**FREDDY ZUCKERMAN:** 20s, Louise's nebbish boyfriend, timid and eager to please.

**DOROTHY ARNFIELD:** 40s, sexy widow on the prowl.

**SIDNEY HERSCH:** 50s, attractive widower.

*Coming Back to Jersey*

- 4 -

**SETTING/TIME**

Upper middle class living room in New Jersey, 1965. Front door, one door to interior hall.

**SYNOPSIS OF SCENES**

Act I

Scene 1: Karchmer living room, early Friday evening.

Scene 2: The same, half an hour later.

Scene 3: The same, two hours later.

Act II

Scene 1: Living room, Saturday morning.

Scene 2: The same, Saturday afternoon.

Scene 3: The same, Saturday night.

**ACT I**  
**Scene 1**

*(AT RISE: Upper middle class living room. Early Friday evening. A card table sits to one side. HOWARD is lying on his back on the floor, motionless. NORMA enters from the hall with a dust cloth and starts cleaning, then sees him and goes to stand over him, not overly concerned.)*

**NORMA:** Howard. Are you dead, Howard? Tell me if you're dead and I'll call someone. Howard.

**HOWARD:** *(Without opening his eyes or moving.)* I'm not dead.

**NORMA:** You look dead. What are you doing on the floor?

**HOWARD:** Exercising.

**NORMA:** What exercising? You aren't moving.

**HOWARD:** I'm on a mountaintop.

**NORMA:** What mountaintop? You're in our house in New Jersey.

**HOWARD:** I'm far away on a mountaintop...exercising.

**NORMA:** Are you skiing, Howard? You always wanted to learn to ski.

**HOWARD:** I'm not skiing.

**NORMA:** What else do people do on mountaintops?

**HOWARD:** Okay, I'll tell you. I'm making love.

**NORMA:** I should've known from the dead look.

**HOWARD:** I'm making love to a beautiful woman.

**NORMA:** Who is she? Is it Dorothy Arnfield? I bet it's Dorothy Arnfield.

**HOWARD:** It isn't Dorothy. It's a beautiful spy who needs me to help her save the world.

**NORMA:** Howard, stop doing whatever you're doing and come back to Jersey.

**HOWARD:** But it's so wonderful here.

**NORMA:** Why'd you get down there in the first place?

**HOWARD:** I dropped a quarter. After I found it, I had no place else to go.

**NORMA:** You're getting yourself all dusty. I didn't vacuum this week.

**HOWARD:** *(Opens his eyes, reluctantly rises.)* Oh, all right. Goodbye, Sonya.

**NORMA:** Sonya. Is that the spy's name? I bet she looked like Dorothy.

**HOWARD:** I don't know. I've never seen so much of what I normally don't see.

**NORMA:** *(Dusting HIM off.)* Except in your imagination.

**HOWARD:** Norma...after all these years of marriage, all I have left is imagination.

**NORMA:** Imagine yourself onto the couch. Louise called. She's coming over, and she's bringing Freddy. *(Continues straightening the room.)*

**HOWARD:** Finally we get to meet him. Is it serious?

**NORMA:** Do you mean are they sleeping together?

**HOWARD:** That's not what I meant. I meant serious, like a life together and wedding rings and raising children and paying off a mortgage. Serious.

**NORMA:** It all comes from sleeping together...which they better not be. We raised Louise to be a good girl. Or at least I did.

**HOWARD:** If Louise got any better, she'd have to convert and be a nun.

**NORMA:** Nobody's converting. Nobody's being a nun.

**HOWARD:** What? You got something against nuns?

**NORMA:** A nun won't give me grandchildren.

**HOWARD:** Unless she breaks her vow of celebrity.

**NORMA:** Celibacy, Howard. You mean a vow of celibacy.

**HOWARD:** If she broke it, it would mean celebrity.

**NORMA:** Why do you dream these things up? Can't you be satisfied with living a normal life?

**HOWARD:** Being a tailor for thirty years isn't normal enough for you? Thirty years of measuring and cutting and stitching. Everything just right. Everything has to fit.

**NORMA:** What's wrong with that?

**HOWARD:** Nothing's wrong with that. And everything's wrong with that.

**NORMA:** I have never understood you, Howard.

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