

Back to Jack

by Jane K. Cleland

A six-character (five actors), three puppet; one set; two-act murder mystery play about the fragility of female relationships when there's a man involved.

SYNOPSIS

Three women from wildly different backgrounds work side-by-side at a *Nighthawk*-esque diner in midtown Manhattan: Lou Ann, a southern belle actress; Ellie, the daughter of a Boston poet; and Marney, an immigrant from Belfast. They have more in common than their waitress jobs—they also share a man, Jack. Jack is part mirage, part cowboy, and all Trouble, with a capital T. Jack entices the women into romantic relationships they know won't do them, or their friendships, any good; he involves Gus, the owner of the diner where the women wait tables, in a gambling scheme; and then he disappears, off to Vegas, he says, catch ya later. Good riddance, they all think... except like a bad penny, Jack comes back. Within minutes of his return, he's shot dead. The police determine that only the cardboard cut-out puppets, Lou Ann, Ellie, Marney, or Gus could have pulled the trigger. With the police net closing in, the women have to confront their frailties and decide once and for all which matters most—the truth or one another.

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

Lou Ann: A 30-something, attractive blonde from Louisiana.

Ellie: A 30-something, attractive brunette from Boston.

Marney: A 24 year-old Irish immigrant.

Jack: In his 30s. (Can also play Detective Hunter.)

Police Detective Hunter: In his 30s. (Can also play Jack.)

Boss man, Gus: In his 40s or 50s.

Ollie, Pete, and Harry: Cardboard cut-out puppets, they sit on stools with their backs to the audience. HARRY is on the far left, with two empty stools to his right. PETE's on the next stool. OLLIE's on the far right. HARRY raises his left arm to catch a waitress' attention. PETE's elbows move rhythmically, as if he's cutting a steak. OLLIE's right arm lifts as if he's sipping coffee. Their other motions include standing in place, shrugging their shoulders, shaking their heads, leaning to one direction or the other, and lifting their arms while flipping their palms as if to signal "I don't know." We never see their faces.