

More Like Rusty Spoon

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Silver Dagger fails to thrill

How do you best the master of deception, a man who spins intricate lies for a living? This is the thrust of *Silver Dagger*, David French's (*That Summer*) tale of up-and-coming mystery writer Steven Marsh (Randy Parker), his wealthy wife Pam (Kathy Macovichuk) and the web of manipulation that occurs after the couple start receiving strangle letters and phone calls. It's a premise that sounds potentially provoking on paper, but this show is more sliver than dagger on stage.

The main stumbling block in this production is the script. Other than taking a funny jab or two at the Canadian publishing industry, French's script is formulaic and boring—and it drags the whole show down with it. Everything is over-explained (lines like “You must be wondering . . .” and “There's just one flaw . . .” are uttered far too many times during the show) and there are lots of missed opportunities to explore new themes or deepen characters, such as Pam's best friend, lawyer Jane Talbot (Wendy Magahay)—indeed, one of the things I liked best about *A Shot in the Dark*, Langham's last murder mystery, was the fact it went beyond the whodunnit and examined ideas around power and politics. Dan Thachuk's set, which sets the action in a library in an upscale Toronto home and is surrounded in dark blue, suggests we might see French's script get into Steven Marsh's brain and blur the lines between fantasy and reality, but it never really goes there.

Director Angela Henry manages to get some decent performances out of her cast, particularly in the more tense exchanges between Pam and Steven. There were a few too many line flubs on opening night, but with such an expository script, that wasn't too much of a surprise. Particularly enjoyable was Brayden Reger's turn as ex-con-turned-mechanic Tony Bishop. While Susan Ferguson and Diane Madill's costumes are sharp, I preferred their chic '50s outfits in *Picnic*.

With a more engaging script, I'm sure this competent cast and crew could have staged a good murder mystery, a staple of the Langham Court stage. But this *Silver Dagger* is dull indeed.