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In Atwater, a dark secret at the center of 'Forever Bound'

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By F. KATHLEEN FOLEY | MAY 25, 2018 | 10:30 AM



French Stewart, left, and Steve Apostolina in Apostolina's play "Forever Bound" at Atwater Village Theatre. (Kathy Flynn)

Suspending disbelief for Steve Apostolina's play "Forever Bound" premiering at the Atwater Village Theatre proves a tall order.

Not that the production doesn't feature many obvious virtues, including Ann Hearn Tobolowsky's crackerjack direction and an able cast, including Apostolina himself, along with French Stewart, Rob Nagle and Emily Goss, all excellent. And there's no denying that Apostolina has a real flair for naturalistic dialogue and darkly trenchant humor.

However, this is one of those frustrating "Why don't they just pick up a phone and call the cops?" plays that sacrifices sense for coloration. Of course, once the cops are summoned, the play would end. Still, the question remains: Why are the characters ignoring the most obvious solution to their dilemma? Despite Apostolina's most valiant efforts to shore up his shaky central premise, that question is never sufficiently addressed.

To sum things up without any spoilers (though the big reveal comes not long into the play, so the term spoiler is relative), impecunious book scout Edmund (Stewart) is facing eviction. His pal Shep (Apostolina) persuades him to sneak into the home of a wealthy academic (Nagle) and steal a copy of "Leaves of Grass" worth thousands. Once inside, let's just say that Edmund gets a shock that will change him from a mild-mannered loser to an agent of vengeance.

Goss shines as a sheltered naïf who must overcome a lifetime of indoctrination to experience the wider world. Apostolina is dryly amusing as a strangely noble huckster who plays fast and loose with the law, while Nagle chills as a pedophilic pedant skilled in the art of self-justification. In his authentic, in-the-moment turn, Stewart transitions from gentlemanly reserve to protective rage — a subtly harrowing transformation.

Despite its crucial lapse into illogic, "Bound" is elevated by the technical proficiency of the performers and a dynamic staging. If, like Alice, you can practice believing impossible things and suspend your disbelief, it may be worth a try.

'Forever Bound'

Where: Atwater Village Theatre, 3269 Casitas Ave., Los Angeles

When: 8 p.m. Fridays-Saturdays and Mondays, 2 p.m. Sundays; ends June 16

Tickets: \$25-\$35

Information: (323) 960-4429.

www.plays411.com/foreverbound

Running time: 1 hour, 25 minutes



Rob Nagle and Emily Goss in "Forever Bound" at Atwater Village Theatre. (Kathy Flynn)