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Subject: LA Weekly review (so-so)

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April 7 – 13, 2006

THE FORCE OF CHANGE According to British and Irish news reports, playwright Gary Mitchell, author of this Northern Irish drama, is currently in hiding, his family having been run out of their Belfast home by loyalist paramilitaries. However, if you're expecting an evening of charged political theater, prepare to be surprised: Mitchell's play is, at its heart, a traditional, somewhat claustrophobic, but steadfastly apolitical cop drama. Ambitious female Royal Ulster detective Caroline (Peggy Goss) becomes infuriated with her increasingly sullen and passive-aggressive partner, Bill (Barry Lynch), as they're assigned to "break" a recently captured young thug (Rick Crawford), whom they know is an active member of the Loyalist terrorist army. But the thug has his own agenda and as the interrogations continue, Caroline gradually grows to suspect Bill of trying to undercut her authority. Mitchell's drama has some suspenseful moments, but the plot peters out into awkward diversions and the finale strikes one as being both improbable and irresolute. Director John Swanbeck's staging is quick paced, though there isn't really much for the characters here to do but sit in chairs and bicker. Goss' brittle Caroline, Lynch's bumbling, sleazy Bill, and Crawford's rat-faced, smirking thug are all wonderfully vivid acting turns. McCadden Place Theater, 1157 N. McCadden Pl., Hlywd.; Thurs.-Sat., 8 p.m.; Sun., 2 p.m.; thru May 7. (818) 780-0661. (Paul Birchall)

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