

# READER

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LOS ANGELES'S FREE WEEKLY

## Theater

**The Early Girl.** Caroline Kava's telling drama centers around the cloistered lives of a group of upscale prostitutes, but whorehouse diversions are only incidental to this story. Kava eschews the sexual melodramatics engendered by the subject matter, and instead pursues a metaphorical examination of the act: denial of self, total vulnerability, self-deceit—how the seven very different characters cope with what they do, what they tell themselves, what they do or do not feel. All of the action takes place in the kitchen, a kind of way station between tricks where the women rest, read, chat, cry, dream—where they live. Their madam, Lana (Morgan Lofting), treats them as if they were junior executives. There's a special place and gifts for the "number one girl," a graphic display to chart each girl's efforts, and penalties for rule-breaking. Their lives are ordered and secure; material satisfaction is readily available, but at what price? In broadening the metaphor, Kava invites us to mentally peel away the veneer, or peer around the corner, to find our own answer. (Reviewed by Ken Blais.) Back Alley Theatre, 15231 Burbank Bl, Van Nuys, (818) 780-2240. Thurs-Sats at 8, Suns at 2 and 7. Closes September 27.