

June 8 - 23, 2007

The Smell of the Kill

Reviewed by [Brad Hathaway](#)

Running time 1:20 - no intermission

◆ A Potomac Stages Pick for a light diversion delivered with verve

There are six cast members listed in the program but you only see three women on stage, the ones who joke about how their lives would be better if their husbands were dead. What gives? In a nifty piece of writing, playwright Michelle Lowe calls for the actors playing these three women's husbands to be off-stage all night long, delivering their lines through the door at stage left. It is more than just a comedic technique. It is the reason that the audience can laugh this much at the debate over husbandcide. The men never become real people in the audience's mind, but we still get to witness some of the irritating habits these men have and come to understand and believe the women's complaints. The women become very real, however, and Margaret Bush, Katie Gentic and Gail Seavey create very distinct personalities while trading pithy observations and witty rejoinders in a concise, tightly constructed single act.



Storyline: Three wives, each unsatisfied with their marriage but each for a different reason, are relegated to the kitchen to chat after dinner while their husbands pursue manly activities, including a visit to the new refrigerated meat locker one has had installed in his basement to hold the carcasses of his hunting successes. The wives realize a unique opportunity to escape their mutually disappointing lives when the door of the locker accidentally slams shut and the husbands have no means of escape. Will the wives decide to open the door or take the unexpected opportunity to start their lives anew?

Playwright Michelle Lowe seems to be having more luck with her short, small cast comedies for actresses than lengthier projects. Her *String of Pearls*, a single act, four woman comedy generated many a laugh in New York a few years ago as it earned her a nomination for the Outer Critics Circle award for best off-Broadway play. Then, this play had a brief run on Broadway where it simply didn't have enough heft to succeed. Heft isn't what it is all about - nor subtlety. The three characters Lowe creates are hardly deep thinkers, but, oh, they have an almost inexhaustible supply of one-liners.

Bush, Gentic and Seavey work together as an ensemble very well and each succeeds in creating a different personality. Bush's "Nicky," with a tan that looks just right for a woman who spends quality time at the spa or poolside, sets the pace for the trio. She's a bright and chipper woman who has been pushed to the limit. Gentic's "Molly" is the youngest of the bunch, frustrated by her husband's feigned affection which rarely finds physical expression, and Seavey's "Debra" is the senior partner who has buried her disappointments and frustrations for so long it is difficult to let them surface.

Set designer Jarret Baker and director Olson deserve specific kudos for the decision to place the detailed kitchen set close to the lip of the large and deep stage of the Lee Center. Often, designers and directors feel a need to use all the space available and end up with a set too far back and too distant from the audience, resulting in a feeling of separation and distance that does damage to the experience of a show. This intimate comedy requires a sense of immediacy and that is exactly what it gets from this design. The use of actual kitchen cabinetry adds a feeling of reality that works nicely, and as a note, it is all for sale when the run is over.

Written by Michele Lowe. Directed by Scott Olson. Design: Jarret Baker (set, lights and sound) Maggie Bush, Katie Gentic and Gail Seavey (costumes) Pat Jannell (properties) Douglas Olmsted (photography) Carlyn Lightfoot (stage manager). Cast: Margaret Bush, K. Clayton, Katie Gentic, C. Evans Kirk, Gail Seavey, Cal Whitehurst or Ron Field.