

THE INITIATION

CATHY PETOCZ



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Cover shows, L-R: Thomas Bigsby-Chamberlin, Latsamy Carruthers, Disa Swifte, Danni Allen, Tara Saxena and Persephone Bates d'Arbela.

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THE INITIATION

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Theatre Program at the end of the playtext

The Initiation was first produced by Canberra Youth Theatre at The Courtyard Studio, Canberra Theatre Centre, on 15 June 2022, with the following cast:

REBECCA / SEB	Sylvie Burke
ERIS	Latsamy Carruthers
FEY	Zoe Harris
AMELIA	Juniper Potter
CHRIS	Tara Saxena
LIAM	Harry Ziarno

Director, Cathy Petocz
Set and Costume Designer, Nyx Mathews
Lighting Designer, Gillian Schwab
Sound Designer, Patrick Haesler
Assistant Director, Caitlin Baker
Stage Manager, Rhiley Winnett
Dramaturgy and Cultural Support, Ethan Bell

This play was developed with Canberra Youth Theatre young artists: Danni Allen, Imogen Atkinson, Thomas Bigsby-Chamberlin, Sylvie Burke, Latsamy Carruthers, Stephanie Hudson, Elian Louchart-Fletcher, Bridie Mackay, Juniper Potter, Tara Saxena, Zoe Smith and Christopher Want.

CHARACTERS

FEY, 15. A quick-thinking overachiever who is afraid she might not be able to believe in God anymore.

REBECCA, 15. The girl who used to be impatient to grow up is now feeling weird about leaving childhood behind.

LIAM, 14. a quiet, nerdy boy who can't figure out how he will approach becoming a man in the age of toxic masculinity.

CHRIS, 15. A rational, politically progressive teenage private eye who feels inexplicably terrified by and drawn to another girl in the group.

AMELIA, 14. The self-made outsider, she is having huge trouble dealing with anything at all and secretly hurting herself is the only way to feel okay.

ERIS (STRIFE), 15. A haughty mean girl who is actually a thousands-year-old supernatural being who needs to be reunited with her sword (The Knife) in order to return to her magical realm.

SEB, early 20s. Fey's older brother. He is a voiceover only (possibly the voice of the actor playing Rebecca except pitched down).

THROUGH FEY, a voice speaking through Fey.

SETTINGS

The play takes place on Ngunnawal / Ngambri Country.

First and last, the fairly posh suburb of Turner: David Street in particular and the threshold of Barry Drive.

But mostly, the wilds of Black Mountain.

The play takes place over one night, from twilight to dawn, from one liminality to another.

Once in the bush of Black Mountain, time moves around in an unreliable way, it splits into two (or more) threads which all happen at the same time.

RULES OF THE WORLD

The Knife is a shapeshifting being which transforms according to the desires and needs of the person who beholds and holds it. Others see it in the form the bearer co-creates, for example: Liam spies and picks up a machete and the others see The Knife as a machete at that time. Eris knows The Knife is who it is.

Actors keep the bloodstains from previous scenes, even if that reality is not true in the scene being played.

This play text went to press before the end of rehearsals and may differ from the play as performed.

SCENE 0

As the audience enters, ERIS is eating a bright red toffee apple on a stick. The apple is the Earth to ERIS.

There is a terrible sound brewing, but it is growing very gradually. There is also the sound of her eating, which is unnoticeable at first but becomes full-strength ASMR, then beyond.

This is ERIS' last meal before she leaves Earth. She is thinking about how she used to love it here but now she hates it, she is sick of humanity. The sound is her resolve to leave, her anger at being stuck here for so long. She is gathering herself up, getting ready.

SCENE 1

When the audience is in, the house lights down, the sound and the feeling grows until she finishes the toffee apple. The sound is almost unbearable.

ERIS quells the unbearable sound somewhat, still present as she speaks ... She uses the stick to carve out CHRIS's name in the ground. A love spell.

During her speech, the teens are introduced in a strobe-lit, flickering sequence of horror-type jump-cut images, as described below the speech. This should build a sense of threat.

ERIS: Apple on a stick

It makes me sick

It makes my heart beat two-forty-six

Not because you're dirty

Not because you're clean

Not because you kissed the boy behind the magazine

Girls, boys, having fun

Here comes the lady with the big fat bum

She can wiggle, she can waggle

She can even do the splits

But I bet you

I bet you
 She can't do this
 Close your eyes and count to ten
 If you muck it up, you're not my friend
 One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten—

CHRIS twirls a pen without noticing. She is thinking about ERIS.

REBECCA cuts a pair of denim shorts shorter.

FEY exercises furiously with headphones on.

LIAM plays a violent video game.

AMELIA reads a book to distract herself but it's not working.

FEY does the plank-based mountain-climbing exercise and stops, pulling off her headphones—she thought she heard something.

LIAM plays the game and makes a great kill and smiles.

CHRIS sees something by torchlight that disgusts and scares her.

AMELIA drops the heavy book and rolls up her sleeve.

REBECCA puts lipstick on.

Then, all at the same time ...

AMELIA watches the cut on her arm bleed, then stops it by pressing it to her mouth.

CHRIS writes about ERIS.

REBECCA wipes the lipstick off.

LIAM gets killed and flinches.

FEY has a panic attack with her phone pressed to her ear waiting for REBECCA to pick up.

As ERIS counts, they all become aware of a weird taste and discover their mouths are filled with blood. It oozes out, they cough it up, spit it out, and they are terrified.

You didn't muck it up so you're my best—

The Knife is revealed in a flash of light. We don't know who is holding it.

I'm gonna get you.

ERIS rapidly plunges the toffee apple stick into the ground and jumps up and dashes off stage.

ERIS has summoned *The Knife*.

SCENE 2

CHRIS enters, checks no-one is watching, and creeps up to the site of the spell. She pulls out a plastic baggie and tweezers, and bags up the stick. Then she sees her name scratched into the ground and is suitably freaked out.

The sound of a horror movie scream as a window opens. CHRIS is doubly freaked.

FEY and REBECCA climb out of a window. CHRIS is relieved.

REBECCA and FEY try not to make too much sound but laugh and shush each other as they clumsily escape. When they are both out, they are pleased with themselves: *freedom!*

CHRIS: Where are you two going?

FEY and REBECCA scream.

REBECCA: Oh my god, Chris! / What are you doing here?

FEY: Shhhhh!

CHRIS: Nothing!

FEY: [*noticing her brother through the window*] Oh brother: Seb's sneaking beers again. Dad's gonna kill you!

REBECCA: Let's get out of here. Come with?

CHRIS: Where are you going?

FEY: Out. We don't know. Anywhere!

REBECCA: Gotta get away from Seb—

FEY: My big brother. He's watching this lame-ass horror movie we're not allowed to watch so we're fucking getting outta here.

CHRIS: Fey Chrysler! School Captain, Dux-of-the-School, ballet dancer, elite debater, advanced-maths-extended-Fey ... Did you just say the f-word?

FEY: What the fucking fuck are you fucking talking about?

CHRIS: Okayyyyy ... Chill Miss Rebel.

LIAM walks past in the distance.

REBECCA: Who's that?

CHRIS: It's Liam. He goes to my school, the grade below us. I see him in the library a lot.

REBECCA: He looks like a serial killer. Hey! What's his name again—Liam? Liam! Hey Liam! Li-am! Come over here!

FEY: [*to REBECCA*] What are you doing??

LIAM approaches uncertainly.

REBECCA: Let's have a bit of fun. Hey Liam. Whatcha up to?

LIAM: Just heading home. [*To CHRIS*] Hey.

CHRIS: Hey.

REBECCA: Where from?

LIAM: Uhhhh ... Just the library. Just studying.

CHRIS: I told you! He basically lives in the library. You probably only left because it closed.

LIAM: Yeah well ...

REBECCA: What were you studying? Lesbian porn?

FEY: [*laughing*] Oh my god, Becca!

LIAM: Ah, no.

REBECCA: You're not interested in the female anatomy?

LIAM: No, it's—

REBECCA: He's gay.

CHRIS: Becca, leave him alone!

LIAM: I'm not gay.

FEY: Oh he's not *gay* ...

CHRIS: Cool. Cos we don't shame people about their sexuality—

FEY: ... he's an axe murderer! He was looking up how to sharpen his axe!

REBECCA: He was looking up how to seduce his victims.

FEY: And chop up the bodies!

REBECCA: Now I get it, and we're totally cool with your sexuality, you like DEAD BODIES. / Blue lips, stiff limbs, staring eyes, stone cold—

FEY: Ew! Necrophilia!

LIAM: [*bursting out*] I was looking up how to be a man!

Everyone is so stunned, no-one even laughs.

LIAM starts to charge away but REBECCA cuts him off.

REBECCA: How to be a man?

CHRIS: Screw you Becca. But seriously Liam, at the library?

LIAM: Our computer is in the living room and I'm not looking it up there in the middle of our house. And I don't have a phone. My mum's really strict. So I just ... I just waited until nearly everyone had left the library and I just quickly Googled, just looked at the WikiHow for a second ...

REBECCA: What did it say?

FEY: Yeah, oh my god, what did it say?

CHRIS: Shut up, guys.

LIAM: Why don't you just look it up yourselves?

AMELIA floats out of her house in her own world.

They all watch her.

She freezes when she sees them.

AMELIA: What are you looking at?

FEY: We're looking up how to be a man!!

LIAM: Can you just drop it?

CHRIS: They're torturing him.

AMELIA: Do it.

She snatches the phone from FEY.

What's better, look up how to be a woman. It's fucking gnarly.

FEY: Um! That's my phone! Who are you? Who is she?

CHRIS: Amelia.

LIAM: We all go to school together.

CHRIS: [*about FEY and REBECCA*] We do debating together.

FEY: We go to Edgecliff Girls.

AMELIA: [*looking at REBECCA*] And we used to be best friends.

REBECCA: Hi Amelia. Awkward much?

FEY: Ohhhhh, this is the—

AMELIA: The what?

FEY: Oh sorry, nothing. I just meant—

AMELIA: What?

REBECCA: Nothing.

AMELIA: You saying shit about me, Rebecca?

FEY: No, she just—

REBECCA: Amelia ... We used to be friends, I moved schools, we lost touch. No biggie.

AMELIA: [*clutching The Knife in her pocket*] WHAT ARE YOU FUCKING SAYING ABOUT ME?

CHRIS: I've literally never heard either of you talk about the other.

REBECCA: Millie, chill.

AMELIA: DON'T FUCKING TELL ME TO CHILL.

CHRIS: Yeah that's the worst! Like when has the command CALM DOWN ever worked?

LIAM: Makes my mum go crazy.

CHRIS: Sooooooo! How do I become a woman? It's my lifelong dream so ...

AMELIA: What?

CHRIS: Lay the Wiki on me!

AMELIA: Well. First of all, it's actually how to be a Lady. Nothing on 'woman' at all. There are only three parts: Behaving Like a Lady, Dressing Like a Lady, and Proper Table Etiquette.

FEY: That's ridiculous.

AMELIA: Like I said.

REBECCA: What does it say about behaving like a lady?

AMELIA: Make thoughtful introductions. Have good posture. Don't overeat or drink excessively. Know when to say no.

CHRIS: I say No to WikiHow and say Yes to doing whatever the hell I want.

FEY: Yeah, gross!

AMELIA: And check out how different How to Be a Man is: Know yourself. Be knowledgeable about something.

LIAM: It's not that helpful. Be a *good* man, know the man-code.

REBECCA: What the fuck is the man-code?

LIAM: No idea.

AMELIA: [*laughing hysterically*] Clean yourself!! It actually says that. Oh my god, I'm instantly gay.

FEY: That's so real!

CHRIS: Uh, it doesn't work like that.

AMELIA: Don't tell me how my sexuality works!

FEY: Yeah, Chris—we don't shame each other about our sexuality.

LIAM: Not this again.