

Bathory Begins

by Emme Hoy and Gretel Vella



A Playlab Publication

Notes

Characters

The Butt Road Girls

TAYLAH
VALERIE
JANE
LILY
SUMMER
SYLVIE
MAUDE

The Judas Gents

ROYCE
WALTER
CHARLIE
RICKY
GABRIEL
TOM
SIMON

Rules

Eavesdropping

We're in a crowded classroom. There are lots of conversations happening at once. People can usually overhear each other - unless the speaker is making an effort to be quiet, or something distracting is going on. There's no such thing as privacy in a public school.

The Classroom

Classroom 10A is lined with cupboards, and has a large storage room centerstage. This is where MRS BATHORY generally hides before class. To the side is the door to the hallway. The windows are barred. There's no other way out.

Walter's Soliloquies

They're classic soliloquies. Whenever he slips into one, everyone freezes and no one can hear him. It's just Walter, the audience, and his deep, dark emotions.

Bathory Begins

SCENE 1

Butt Road High: The Year Ten Art and Design room. An ancient, neglected, educational environment that would never, ever pass an OH & S assessment. Artworks plastered over artworks, dangerously exposed saws and drills, coloured pencils on every surface ...

On the back wall of this room hangs a black cape that belongs to the absent MRS. BATHORY. Underneath it, a cluster of uniformed girls watch their leader TAYLAH nurse a bucket. Unfortunately, a commotion at the front door has thrown off their focus ...

A group of remarkably coiffed, private school boys file in, take their blazers off, and look around. Entirely unimpressed, their leader, ROYCE, douses his hands in Dettol antiseptic fluid.

ROYCE

I'd like everyone to take a deep breath. Not too fervent or we'll inhale the dust. But deep enough to enjoy the benefits of calming oxygen.

Pause.

It's *rustic*. That's all.

GABRIEL

Rustic. Yes. I can do rustic.

ROYCE

And quaint.

RICKY

Oh, good word!

WALTER

There's nowhere to hang our coats, Royce.

TOM

What? Surely you're wrong.

They all walk around with their blazers floating out in front of them, looking for a hook.

TAYLAH Who the bloody bush turkey are they?

SUMMER I don't know. But they look clean.

TAYLAH Too clean.

LILY What are they doing?

JANE Playing with their blazers. Must be a game. A private school game.

SUMMER Looks kind of fun.

TOM What kind of a room is this?

ROYCE I don't know. In my correspondence with Mrs. Bathory she called it an —

He says it like a pirate.

Art room.

They all say it like pirates.

TOM Art?

GABRIEL Art.

RICKY Arrrrrrt.

GABRIEL You know, like Van Gogh. Or Picasso.

TOM Why does our school not offer *arrrrrt*?

WALTER Because they don't want to ruin our grad stats with a slew of part-time baristas.

ROYCE comes to a chewing gum infested desk, pulls out a stool, and places his blazer over it. The rest of his men follow suit. But stools are foreign, dangerous creatures. No one can quite work out how to sit down.

JANE They can't be here. This morning's operation must have no witnesses.

TAYLAH One second, ladies. I'll tell em' to fuck off.

VALERIE You can't. They're from Leedsby. They've traveled for two hours.

TAYLAH Big deal. They should try getting a lift to school everyday with my uncle Phil. He normally forgets his glasses. And calls traffic lights 'suggestions'.

SUMMER Val might have a point.

VALERIE It's *Valerie*.

SUMMER If we tell them to leave they'll go walking around, won't they? People might start to ask questions.

TAYLAH So we just go through with it? Explain later? They'll understand.

CHARLIE I don't understand. What are these things?

WALTER Chairs.

CHARLIE Why are they up so high?

WALTER They're stools. Artists use them.

SIMON Women use them. To plot their schemes from an altitude.

ROYCE It's alright Simon, old pal.

SIMON It's not. This excursion is very triggering.

WALTER What have you gotten us into, Royce? As your second in charge, I feel it my responsibility to echo the dissatisfied sentiments of the group. If only you'd listened to my pitch for that cultural exchange to Italy.

RICKY Italy?

CHARLIE I love Italy!

ROYCE Ah, but think of your resumes, gentleman! Imagine the flexing this is gifting your philanthropic muscles!

WALTER I think it might be flexing your cheek muscle, actually.

ROYCE I beg your pardon?

WALTER It's twitching. Your whole face is sort of twitching. Are you ok?

ROYCE I was. But now you've brought it to my attention, perhaps I feel truly awful? It must be the girl's fumes. All that paint. And their estrogen.

SIMON And their periods.

WALTER What?

SIMON Nothing.

ROYCE gets down off his chair and squirts a load more Dettol into his hands.

WALTER What's say I run through your guidelines while you take care of yourself?

ROYCE Good idea.

WALTER Don't sign anything.

RICKY Ok.

WALTER Don't look them in the eyes.

CHARLIE Easy.

WALTER Keep your valuables where you can see them. Best give me your phones. We'll stow them in a communal area for safety.

WALTER grabs a small calico bag. The boys line up, and one by one, drop their phones into it. Across the room, TAYLAH holds out her bucket to the girls.

JANE

Ladies. Gather round.

They do.

We always knew this was going to be difficult. Bathory is a supernatural enigma. Not quite vampire, not quite witch, not quite crap art teacher. My research into the occult tells me we must use a combination of materials to get this job done.

MAUDE takes a tube of minced garlic and squeezes some into the bucket.

We have garlic.

MAUDE

Its aroma capable of scaring off many a terrifying beast.

SUMMER kisses some rose quartz, then adds that, too.

JANE

Rose quartz.

SUMMER

To foster love, harmony and compassion in Bathory's evil heart.

Then SYLVIE adds The Bible.

JANE

And The Bible.

They wait for her to explain. She just makes the sign of the cross. They all follow suit. Finally, TAYLAH takes a sports drink bottle and violently squirts some water into the bucket.

TAYLAH

So, I know you guys said to get Father Thomas to bless the Holy Water mixing agent, but he's on holiday in Bali. So I got Mrs. Jenkins from PE to give it a quick once over, instead.

SUMMER

Close enough.

MAUDE

You seen those thighs? She's holy to me.

TAYLAH

Val? Is there anything you'd like to add?

VALERIE

Sure. This is stupid.

- TAYLAH I can't put negativity into the bucket. Nor do I want to.
TAYLAH takes her potion and moves for the storeroom door. LILY blocks her path.
- LILY Taylah? Hold on a sec.
- JANE No time. She's about to come out!
- LILY You know I enjoy a casual murder plot as much as the next person. But I'm starting to feel kind of down.
- MAUDE You're always down. You're an emo.
- LILY I'm an *artist*. A tortured artist. And Bathory, she was my muse. What do you call an artist without a muse?
- TAYLAH *Alive?*
- LILY She would never hurt me.
- MAUDE Lil. We found her list, and you were on it.
- SUMMER And one time, when you turned your back, she smelt you.
- TAYLAH I know you and Bathory had a special relationship, but what kind of a Captain would I be if I let anyone else get smelt like you did?
- JANE We've been planning this for months. She feeds every Wednesday inside that cupboard. If we miss her at 9am, we'll have to wait til next week!
TAYLAH tries to head toward the storeroom again. LILY blocks her path for a second time.
- SIMON What are they doing now?
- RICKY They're fighting over a bucket. Must be a game. A public school game.
- GABRIEL Looks kind of fun.

LILY Fine! *Fine*. If we're really set on this plan, then I'd like to be the one to do the honours.

JANE The *honours*?

LILY Because it *would* be an honour. Ending the life of such a remarkable woman. I suppose it's like when you pull your goldfish out of its tank and watch it stop breathing. Or squeeze the cute chick too hard at the petting zoo. Because you respect and admire it so much.

MAUDE Yeah, I don't think that's a thing.

LILY And having created a portrait series based on Bathory's rise in this place ... I think it's only fitting I be inspired by her decline.

MAUDE Just let her do it, Taylah. Before she squeezes you to death, too!

TAYLAH rolls her eyes and lets go of the bucket. LILY looks at the storeroom door, smack bang in the middle of the boys' and girls' tables.

TAYLAH Well hurry, then!

LILY What about the ... ?

She nods at the boys.

MAUDE Don't worry. We'll distract them.

SIMON They're looking at us.

SUMMER They're looking at us.

TOM I'm trying not to look back.

GABRIEL Royce's guidelines said not to look back.

WALTER They're not literal.

- ROYCE They are. Women of a lower socioeconomic standing are exceptionally fertile. Sometimes a look is all it takes.
- LILY balances the bucket in one hand and retrieves a ladder with the other. She starts to drag it toward the storeroom. The rest of the girls encroach on the boys on the other side of the room.*
- TAYLAH Sup! I'm Taylah.
- She grabs ROYCE's hand and shakes it. Immediately after, he squirts some more Dettol.*
- ROYCE Sorry. It's not you. I'm just more susceptible to disease than most. I've been sick thirteen times this year. But Principal Murphy tells me what I lack in white blood cells, I make up for in leadership qualities. I'm Royce Alexander Christopher Tuffington-Hobbs.
- TAYLAH That's quite a fancy name you've got there, Roy. Mind if I call you that?
- ROYCE Well, actually —
- TAYLAH Welcome to Butt Road High, Roy. Here long?
- ROYCE Just the day.
- TAYLAH You boys are going to love it. There's a canteen downstairs with awesome fake schnitty. And we just got a patch of fake grass outside the library, too. Love our fake stuff. Now, when I say *library* I mean book room. And when I say room I mean shelf. But it's fuckin' awesome. Whatever you're here for, you're going to love it.
- ROYCE You didn't know we were coming? Mrs. Bathory didn't tell you?
- TAYLAH She doesn't tell us much.

ROYCE Makes sense. You do seem underprepared.

TOM There's no canapes.

GABRIEL Or banners. We normally get a banner.

ROYCE There's a Community Outreach Project in motion. Mrs. Bathory has been my point of contact. We boys are the finest brains from Judas' Gents in Leedsby. We've come to share our special talents with you. Inspire you to greater things than...I don't know, that one shelf library you mentioned. This is Walter. Shakespeare enthusiast. My vicey. Vicey, vice.

He tries to pinch WALTER's cheek. Much to his disdain. Meanwhile, LILY climbs to the top of the ladder and gently rests the bucket in place above the door.

Charlie, our Mathlete champion. Gabriel, violinist and musical Prodigy. Over there is Simon, a Men's Rights Activist with an impressive online presence. And behind him, Tom. Forbes recently named his banking app the highest-grossing of 2019.

TOM The decade, actually. But thanks for the shout-out, Royce.

ROYCE Oh, and I'm forgetting someone. Where are you Ricky?

RICKY turns for his introduction and takes his boater hat off. All the girls suddenly become very interested. He's an Adonis with good hair.

RICKY Over here, Royce. Hi, girls. Mrs. Rogers let me come along. Managed to talk her into it somehow. I'm not good at maths or science, but I *am* a good listener.

He shakes all of their hands. Lots of giggling.

SUMMER Your dimples are lovely. Like an elf's.

CHARLIE You've seen an elf?

SUMMER Of course. There's one standing in the corner right now.

ROYCE The law's my game. Legal studies. Mock trial. Debating.
You may have heard of my father. A lot of people are quite
fond of his radio jingle.

He sings it with GABRIEL.

Tuff-ing-ton - Hobbs! More than just a lawyer!

SUMMER Cool! What else is he then?

ROYCE Oh, no. He's just a lawyer. It's more about the sentiment.

*LILY finally gets the bucket in place. She slowly climbs
down and starts to put the ladder back.*

TAYLAH Yeah, that jingle's a banger. I used to see his poster when I
did work experience last year. The one where he's in court
with his shirt open, holding a golden retriever puppy.

ROYCE You did work experience in Leedsby?

TAYLAH Yeah.

ROYCE At the Estonian butchers across the road or something?
That gorgeous little underground shoe factory?

TAYLAH I did it in his office, you goober. I'm going to be a lawyer, too.

ROYCE and the other boys laugh a little.

Something funny?

ROYCE No. As I said, I'm very susceptible to all kinds of cold and
flu. Throat tickles.

TAYLAH I'm going to be a lawyer.

She points at the other girls.

And Jane's going to be Prime Minister. Summer here's going to be high priestess of her Wiccan clan ...

MAUDE And I guess Val is going to be rich again. Can't remember what for.

VALERIE It's Valerie.

TAYLAH She's my Vice.

WALTER stares at VALERIE for a while.

WALTER I'm sorry. Have we met before?

VALERIE *[Brushing it off]* No. I don't think so.

TOM And what about her? The one in the cupboard?

LILY finishes. Then runs up beside TAYLAH.

LILY I'm an emo. *Dammit.* Artist. I'm a tortured artist.

ROYCE Will Mrs. Bathory be joining us soon? She said 9am on the phone.

TAYLAH Yes. 9am is the plan.

Something is stirring inside the storeroom.

ROYCE Spiffing.

BATHORY finally opens the door.

We see a pair of feet enter 10A. Then a scream, and an all-mighty thump.

LILY Lady Bathory!

Black.

SCENE 2

The boys and the girls stare at BATHORY'S CORPSE. It's a witch-under-the-house situation. Only the legs are visible. The rest is swallowed by the darkness of the deep storeroom cupboard.

Silence.

A very soft scream. Slowly increasing in volume. Then —

ROYCE STOP SCREAMING.

WALTER That's you, Royce.

ROYCE claps his hands over his mouth.

TAYLAH sidles over to JANE and hisses —

TAYLAH Jane ... Jane ... Jane, Jane, Jane, Jane, Jane, Jane — JANE —

JANE Yes?

TAYLAH Why hasn't she dissolved?

JANE Um.

GABRIEL Do you think this is some sort of female hazing ritual?
Some sort of hilarious joke?

SIMON Women aren't funny.

WALTER No, Simon.

RICKY Yeah, Simon. Hazing is classic, classic stuff. When I joined the rowing team we had an initiation ceremony where I had to flex in my underwear in front of everyone for at least twenty minutes. They all took photos.

TOM They didn't ask me to do that, Rick.

RICKY ... Oh.

CHARLIE Maybe we should laugh, and they'll know we know it's a joke and make it stop.

RICKY, CHARLIE, TOM and SIMON laugh uncomfortably. They trail off.

No, no. She has a head injury.

The boys all scream a little. GABRIEL gags.

ROYCE *[not calm]* STAY CALM GENTLEMEN!

TAYLAH You said she'd dissolve in the holy water!

JANE It appears my calculations were incorrect.

LILY Do you think she's still alive?!

TAYLAH Well, she hasn't dissolved like *Jane* promised. *Jane* said Bathory was going to melt away like the wicked fucking witch of the west! Like a wodge of grease down the drain when you blast it with some hot water! Like —

JANE The occult is not my area of expertise!

TAYLAH THERE IS A CORPSE IN THE CLASSROOM ON MY WATCH!

MAUDE Ok. Don't panic, ladies —

ROYCE is panicking.

ROYCE DON'T PANIC LADIES. The menfolk will take care of everything!! Your cupboard-woman will survive! We've trained for this!

He tries to look masterful, but knocks over multiple stools with his shaking.

CHARLIE Have we?

ROYCE We are all Cadets are we not? We are built for crises and unconscious females! Cadets! CODE BLUE!

- WALTER You're going to jail.
- TAYLAH We were just defending ourselves! And if you call the police, they'll take her body: and she'll just rise again. And guess whose nice, fancy blood she smelled last? Guess who was touching her all over during the CPR? She'll smell that! We'll be safe in prison and you'll all be her dinner. I'm doing this for you! We have your best interests at heart!
- CHARLIE My hair gel has a very distinctive aroma.
- SUMMER I like it.
- WALTER Get out of our way.
- JANE darts in front of them.*
- JANE Wait, wait — just listen. Have you heard of Countess Erzebet Báthory de Ecsed?
- Silence.*
- TOM Yeah.
- JANE The sixteenth-century Hungarian countess?
- TOM Hasn't everyone?
- WALTER No.
- TOM Well, I suppose not everyone has the wide knowledge base required of successful entrepreneurs ... She killed over six hundred and fifty peasants.
- JANE All young girls.
- TOM And bathed in their blood in order to obtain eternal youth.
- TAYLAH See?
- WALTER No!