

In the spirit of this play, I think it's only appropriate I pay homage to the wonderful educators and mentors that have helped me along the way. I hear from a lot of people that pursuing a career in the arts has been met with scepticism and eye rolling. This has never, ever been the case for me. To my English, Drama and Scripting teachers, thank you for believing in me and reading pretentious rubbish when I hadn't quite found my voice. To the directors, producers and fellow writers who have taken the time to pass on wisdom or better yet, given me a shot, your generosity is baffling and so appreciated. And to Jane, Fraser, Rowan and the team at ATYP, the most astounding educators of all, thank you for rescuing me straight out of writing school and showing me the way. You guys made me feel like a playwright when I wasn't sure I was one, and have let us run wild with this play.

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And finally, to my Emme. It's rare you find somebody who is on the same weird, wonderful wavelength you are. Thank you for writing this play with me and cry-laughing at your own jokes. Here's to many more collaborations!

Gretel Vella

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# 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!