



# Initiate

*Tara Maya*

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## **Initiate** Tara Maya

The initiation ceremony is the gateway to ultimate power...or death. A DETERMINED GIRL Dindi can't do anything right, maybe because she spends more time dancing with pixies than doing her chores. Her clan hopes to marry her off and settle her down, but she dreams of becoming a Tavaedi, one of the powerful warrior-dancers whose secret magics are revealed only to those who pass a mysterious Test during the Initiation ceremony. The problem? No-one in Dindi's clan has ever passed the Test. Her grandmother died trying. But Dindi has a plan... AN EXILED WARRIOR Kavio is the most powerful warrior-dancer in Faeearth, but when he is exiled from the tribehold for a crime he didn't commit, he decides to shed his old life. If roving cannibals and hexers don't kill him first, this is his chance to escape the shadow of his father's wars and his mother's curse. But when he rescues a young Initiate girl, he finds himself drawn into as deadly a plot as any he left behind. He must decide whether to walk away or fight for her... assuming she would even accept the help of an exile.

## **Initiate Details**

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Author : Tara Maya

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## From Reader Review Initiate for online ebook

### ♥ Sarah says

#### 3.0-3.3 stars

*\*\*Free on amazon:* <http://www.amazon.com/The-Unfinished-...>

This is definitely not the kind of book I usually read – even for a PNR, it's *different*. I felt like I was watching some kind of mystical TV show or something, because the world building was spot-on. I can't even begin to express how impressed I was with the details of this Faeworld. So, if I had to purely base my rating on the world-building aspect, I'd rate it a 5/5. It was flawless, and unique.

However, it got a bit confusing for me to keep up with the 4+ shifts in character POVs – even though it was all written in third person narrative. I would've preferred if the story focused on only 2-3 of the main characters in first person POV, rather than the current format. Also, usually I'm not a stickler for editing, but it was noticeable & distracting enough for me to mention it.

I guess I ultimately expected a very clichéd, young-adult, paranormal romance, between Dindi & Kavio; I was COMPLETELY wrong. There was nothing clichéd about the plot, the world building felt totally unique, and the romance barely even kick-started (it was painfully slow).

So for all of those reasons combined, I was both pleased and disappointed in this first book. I personally don't think any of my book friends would be interested in something like this, though. It's not mainstream enough (as silly as it sounds), and the romance is barely noticeable. On top of that, I was confused, because it was hard following all these different characters... However, I might still pick up the sequel, just to follow up & see where this thing goes...

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### Isis says

When I finished this book, I was mad and disappointed. I was going to give it three stars and not move on to book two. But after reading the authors note at the end, I have changed my mind. I bumped it up a star and will move onto book two when my anger stops simmering.

The Initiate was a kindle freebie that I grabbed because I needed a book to read and the cover looked cool. I think I was going to an appointment or something and needed a book ASAP. I'm glad I grabbed it, though, because the writing is so unique and the world within the book was clear and flourishing, if that makes sense. No? ..... I can't think of the right adjective, but it's like the movie Avatar where the world was... flourishing, you know?

Anyway, I liked the book and the main character. The only hiccup was that I couldn't keep track of the people. The names were too foreign for me. Plus, I was reading another book at the same time and going back and forth made things hard. But I love the idea of magical dancing and children being tested and exiled sons and warriors attacking. It all tied together nicely.

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## **Toni says**

Based on an obscure Polynesian myth, this is a fairy tale, but a fairytale like no other. A little reminiscent of Tolkien, with some of the slightly archaic and elaborate language of a legend's narration, it also has the primeval quality of *Clan of the Cave Bear*. The characters are well-fleshed out with so many facets that there appear to be no truly good or bad ones. Everyone has his secret (including the titular hero and heroine) and his goals and none tell anyone everything.

My only complaint is that I wished there had been a wee bit of an explanation as to setting, etc., before getting into the story. We're immediately plunged into Dindi's part of the tale with no set-up and then we're off and running, just as Dindi is. Other than that, I thoroughly enjoyed this story and look forward to finding the sequel, *Taboo*. I have a feeling the title says it all but it's enough to whet my curiosity.

Well-written with fluid and descriptive passages, this story is one I'd recommend with the warning: Start reading it and you'll wish to complete the series. It's different and refreshing, and entertaining.

This novel was supplied by the author and no remuneration was involved in the writing of this review.

NOTE: Pdfs of novels are not g

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## **PaperBookTeaCat says**

What this is: A serial romance reminiscent of prehistory/pre-Columbian fantasy but forging its own world.

Warnings: The world is surprisingly brutal, especially for the light hearted synopsis. Fitting for the setting expect constant battles for survival, tribal warfare and the like. Sexual assault and rape are mentioned and important to a character's backstory. I didn't mind it as it felt in tune with the setting and wasn't a cheap shock but your mileage may vary. Also, this is an incomplete serial as of the time I post this. If you don't like the idea of sudden endings and waiting for more books, this may not be for you.

Usually I do a Pro and Cons list but I skimmed some of the negative reviews and noticed a trend. I feel like there may have been some confusion over the marketing and many people expected a very different book (not their fault if you look at the cover, synopsis, etc). To be honest, I myself was expecting something much more light hearted and bubbly than what I got. I was pleasantly surprised, but others were understandably disappointed.

The Dindi chapters are generally light-hearted minus one part. These parts feel very young and could even be mistaken as middle school reading. However the other perspectives feel much older and more mature. There are politics, war, death and as mentioned above serious depictions of rape and how a character copes/moves on from that. Although I enjoyed this book, it was a bit of a whiplash even to me. I could see this turning off some other readers.

This book is a bit old school in its prose. It feels as if Lois McMaster Bujold had been asked to write prehistory fantasy but as a serial for the YA crowd. I like Bujold's work, but people more into the trendy, popy YA will probably cringe at this story. People more familiar with older fantasy will feel at home. This has slow, methodical world building that is interesting if you appreciate unique mythos and incredibly

realistic, mature depictions of humans. It also doesn't hold your hand so if you are not paying attention, you might get lost.

The love interests don't meet until later in the story. A lot of traditional romance fans will probably hate this. But I liked that we know how these characters function on their own. They feel more relatable and developed than characters in stories that skip straight to the romance. It made the small romantic moments have more impact to me than they usually do. Most of the time I'm underwhelmed with minor flirtations and kissing in YA, but it's cute here because of all the development and time to attach to these characters.

The biggest "problem" with this book is that it looks like YA with a fantasy paint coat, but it is thoroughly fantasy with a YA bent. If this interests you, the first book is free so I recommend giving it a go.

Blog: <https://paperbookteacat.wordpress.com/>

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### **Kirsty (Amethyst Bookwurm) says**

This and my other reviews can be found at <http://amethystbookwurm.blogspot.co.uk/>

Thanks to Netgalley and Indie Inked for giving me this book and the rest of Faery Worlds to review.

Dindi is a young woman who dreams of becoming a Tavaedi, but cannot do anything right and prefers spending her time dancing with fairies. Kavio is a power Warrior-dancer who is exiled from his home for a crime he did not commit. I just could not get on with Initiate as I did not care much about what happened to the characters, and the plot was a bit confusing. If you enjoy fantasy books with fairies in, I would recommend Winter Queen by Amber Argyle.

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### **Chel (The Procrastinator's Corner) says**

Rating: 4.5/5

The start of the book was a little confusing for me. So many unfamiliar terminologies were mentioned at the first few pages. It took me about fifteen minutes of reading before getting a grip on the story. But once I got a better grasp, the reading became more fluid, although there were still a lot more unknown characters and tribes that were mentioned after that.

Anyway, I was really surprised by this book. This is told in third person, but there are some parts that are told in second. I love the second person POVs! It has that hypnotic quality to it that's so mesmerizing despite how morbid that part of the story is. There are hell lots of characters here and other terms that could be easily forgotten, so if you're planning to read this, I suggest that you take down notes for good measure.

Kavio and Puddlepaws are my favorite characters. I was eagerly anticipating for Kavio moments. He is a strong, intimidating character and he makes me giddy! Puddlepaws is a cute, adorable kitty owned by Dindi. There is less than little romance between Kavio and Dindi. And I must say that this is what really disappointed me in this book. I was waiting and waiting for them to meet. And when they finally met, I all but swooned! Nothing romantic happened between them. They didn't fall in love at first sight. But you just

cannot deny that there are sparks! Sparks! This also has an evil cliffhanger and an even more evil teaser of the sequel. Definitely recommended to all fantasy lovers. :)

Disclosure: This e-book was received from the author (via Amazon) for free in exchange for an honest review.

Original post here.

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## **Ginger says**

### 2.5 Dancing Stars

One of those I liked it, didn't love it.

Dindi is a young girl with the simple dream of dancing. The problem is, if she does not pass the test she must stop dancing forever.

Kavio has an interesting past that we only get little tiny glimpses of. His dad is driven by politics, his mom has a big secret and someone wanted him out of the picture so he could take over his dad's position (heir). Now he is an exile, no name, no home and a war to stop.

Oh and they meet each other for a sec. and kinda get tingly. I have to uber respect, no insta-love here.

There are unique magical elements to this story that you don't see often. The fae are elementals that are only seen by those with enough connection to magic to see them. The dancing is their ritual work, their spell casting, it is only practiced by those with a connection to the fae after they past the initiation test.

There is so much going on in this book. Tribes and clans and factions oh my. I stumbled over the complex names (Dindi being the only name I think I could pronounce correctly). I was starting to get the hang of it, even the strange jump back in time that I didn't realize happened until much later, when it all ended abruptly with a huge cliff hanger....

I shouldn't be surprised because that is what this collection is for, to get you into the series with a teaser. I don't think I will complete this series but I will say the author is building an interesting world, it just takes a bit of stumbling around in order to get your bearings.

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## **Chelsea says**

My initial impressions of the novel are a bit underwhelming. I found it a bit laborious to read, which was unexpected with a quite short 180 or so page book. There were too many changed in POV for my tastes. This chopping and changing increased the confusion I felt during most of the story. I couldn't really connect with

the characters, once you start being familiar with one, it changes to another, and yet another after that. If it was limited to two or three, it would have been much better overall I think.

I felt like I was missing information throughout, and the best way I can describe the feeling is opening a 500 page book on page 250, and starting reading the story from there. I constantly felt like something was missing, that I skipped a book in the series something. One big thing I struggled with, and that was the setting of the novel. I couldn't figure out where the tribes were in the books world in relation to our world. Everything was described so well, yet it lacked grounding for lack of a better term. Now, a fantasy world created purely for the book can be quite obvious – it's created especially for the characters and woven throughout the story – but the references popping up throughout kept me thinking this was occurring on our planet, but quite a while ago.

This was going on in my mind while reading the novel: At first, I'm picturing a desert, with a big river running nearby – ok got it! We are in North Africa, maybe Egypt. Near the Nile possibly? Nice, I love Egyptian mythology! Then shortly after, we are in forests... eating rotten fish flesh... with deer roaming through... and snow. Ok, scratch the Egypt thing, I know where we are! We are in Scandinavia – Vikings! Woohoo! Bring it on! Then I remember the dancing part of the story, and I'm trying to picture big blond Vikings mingling with fairies dancing in rings... Confusion has set in! Then the introduction of tropical references, and I thought wait, wait, wait! We have to be in Hawaii. Could fit I guess!? Then the seven month trek began... and I really can't see it taking seven months to walk from coast to coast on any of the Hawaiian Islands. This then lead me to think Native American, and at this stage I was so confused I wasn't really enjoying the story as I should have been.

It was only after the novel ended that I understood, and I feel a bit let down, because if the information was somehow incorporated into the novel, I would have finished thinking it was brilliant. In the author's note, so much information was given! The novel is set toward the end of the Stone Age, and that the entire world is one continent, before the earth's plate tectonics separated us into the continents we know today. This really appealed to me considering I was destined to become a Geologist but changed my mind at the last minute! Everything clicked once I read that, but unfortunately it came too late and my impression was made up on the book at this stage.

In summary, reading the book itself I was left disappointed. I felt it was disjointed with too many character POV changes. But the authors note has helped changed my mind and see what I felt was missing. If that information was spun into a prologue at the start of the book, maybe with a Creation of the earth slant to it, I think I would have really loved this book. Oh well.

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## **chucklethescot says**

\*I received a free copy of this book through Netgalley in exchange for an honest review\*

Dindi dreams of becoming a Tavaedi, a warrior-dancer with magic powers. Only those who pass an Initiation test can join this group and now her turn has come.

For me, this was the worst book I've read this year. The plot, the characters, the writing, EVERYTHING was wrong with this book. I really hated this one.

Dindi is the most useless excuse for a girl that I've ever seen. She is supposed to be 14 but doesn't seem older than about two. She is stupid, useless, and has the common sense of a blade of grass. She spends all her time dancing with the fae and shirking her chores and this causes chaos everywhere she goes. She screws up the simple act of washing her face, screws up the Initiation kidnap for everyone and makes a mess of everything she says and does. I was hoping that somebody would just kill her as becoming a Happy Meal for her tribe would have given her a use at last! The second story arc following the clan exile is no more interesting.

The book is over-descriptive to excess. We get every detail of Dindi's chores, the village, the market place, Dindi's home, the Initiation, the trek etc and it was far too much for me. I don't need to know the colour and shape of everything. Yet the author did not feel the need to explain the important things. She gives names to things ie '...a kraal at the bottom of the hill held aurochsen and horses'...yet does not think to tell the reader what an aurochsen is! The info dumps are long and complicated with words you don't get given the meaning for which leads to a boring and confusing narrative. There were so many tribes and factions each with different names and traits that it leads to more confusion, especially when the story keeps jumping between them all the time. I was totally lost and could not keep track of who was who, and it got to the stage that I didn't actually care anymore.

It was with a great sense of relief that I decided to give up on this book halfway through and move on to something better.

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### **Riana Elizabeth says**

I seem to be one of the only reviewers who isn't a fan of the cover art. However, I am a fan of the story, even though it didn't start out that way.

There were quite a few "main" characters, and it seems (upon reading other reviews) that I wasn't the only reader having problems distinguishing between them. If there are that many similar complaints about a story, it's a problem that needs to be addressed.

The world building was fantastic. You can taste the heat and sweat and dust when people travel. You can picture the lush greenery surrounding their simple, dun-colored huts.

The plot (though I could have killed the author with that ending) was slow moving at first, but pacing toward the end was much faster as the characters came together and action moved swiftly. I'll be reading the next book - hopefully the wrinkles in this book will have smoothed out by the next.

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### **Anthony Pacheco says**

Before we dive headfirst into the fantasy pool of epic goodness that is Tara Mara's *The Unfinished Song: Initiate*, we need to take a step back and formally define what epic fantasy is in the novel landscape of 2012. The classic definition of epic or high fantasy is it's a sub-genre of fantasy set in invented worlds.

I hate that definition.

To me, epic fantasy needs to be, well, epic. Epic. This is fun, but not epic, fantasy:

A mysterious, sexy pale-skinned sword dancer hires an infamous mercenary to find her kidnapped brother. The mercenary learns there is more to women than bedding them, while the sister learns that if she lets her



quest define her life, she becomes defeated before the rescue of her brother ever begins.

Bonus points if you can guess that book, by the way.

Now this, this is epic:

The good peoples, it seemed, never defeated the evil that threatened to consume them all, only delayed the final battle. The dark and vile lord who threaten freedom everywhere wrapped his essence into a ring, and now a band of unlikely heroes must cast the ring into the fiery pit of its creation or see it reunited with its maker. Setting out on their quest with the best intentions, the task soon falls to the smallest and likeliest hero while the armies of evil marshal to crush everything in its path. If the hero doesn't destroy the ring and thus the dark lord in time, there won't be anything left to save.

Epic fantasy is ambitious. Epic fantasy is grandiose. Epic fantasy is bigger than the sum of its parts. It's heroic, it's classic, it's all-encompassing and all-consuming fantasy. There are stakes. The stakes are high. You could say that the stakes are (wait for it!) epic.

And Mara's Unfinished Song: Initiate is an introduction into 21st century epic fantasy. Here's the teaser:

Dindi can't do anything right, maybe because she spends more time dancing with pixies than doing her chores. Her clan hopes to marry her off and settle her down, but she dreams of becoming a Tavaedi, one of the powerful warrior-dancers whose secret magics are revealed only to those who pass a mysterious Test during the Initiation ceremony. The problem? No-one in Dindi's clan has ever passed the Test. Her grandmother died trying. But Dindi has a plan.

Kavio is the most powerful warrior-dancer in Faearth, but when he is exiled from the tribehold for a crime he didn't commit, he decides to shed his old life. If roving cannibals and hexers don't kill him first, this is his chance to escape the shadow of his father's wars and his mother's curse. But when he rescues a young Initiate girl, he finds himself drawn into as deadly a plot as any he left behind. He must decide whether to walk away or fight for her... assuming she would even accept the help of an exile.

Now I know what you are thinking. You're thinking, wow, that sounds cool, but um, that doesn't sound too epic to me.

Oh, my friends, pour a cup of hot tea and wait for it. Don't let the girly frou-frou cover and character-driven teaser fool you. Behind the rich, detailed world-building lies the heartbeat of an epic fantasy tale that rises above the bounds of mythology and into a coming-of-age novel that will leave the reader yearning for more. Maya clearly dips her plot and characters in several different mythologies, yet the book has a distinctive voice that tugs at your heartstrings.

Let's deconstruct the goodness going on here.

### **World-Building**

Maya's world building kicks ass. It's unique, it's ambitious, and it has an undercurrent of femininity that, without the advent of the interweb tubes, the story Maya is trying to tell never would have seen the light of day. It's so different it is, and I say this with no exaggeration, a high fantasy literary bomb of mass destruction. It is not so much a filled with troupes and familiar themes as it becomes a classic example of the very idea of world-building.

How does she accomplish this? Maya's neolithic setting latches on the magical undercurrents of the world she envisioned and never lets them go.

For example, stone-aged peoples in the real world were concerned primarily with survival. Gender roles and relations follow a path necessary for the continuation of the individual and the group. There is a reason when an attractive woman smiles at a man she unconsciously puts her hair behind an ear, why rejection impacts men and women differently and why we are creatures of instinct despite our technological advancements.

Yet, toss magic into the fray. Magic, like technology, lends itself to the removal of the disparity of force. Maya takes this one step where few tread: it's not necessarily what you can wield, but more what you know. Dindi's quest isn't so much a classic grab-onto-the-power but an unlocking of a mystery.

That moves us back to the impact of the type of magic Maya puts forth. Women, in her tribal society, have distinct roles but they are far from simple property. Women need to bear children so the society she has shaped takes that into account, but it's not as if the magic is something that sits around in a feudal or even Victorian society as if it's a character by itself rather than infused into the setting. It has a distinct feminine vibe without the politically correct bullshit.

This is evident from the ground up. It's in the way characters talk. You might think ancient peoples would also have a primitive language and culture. But neolithic-era people with magic? Maya nails this. It's in the way they dress, how they pick their mates, how they relate to other tribes, how they view politics, honor and duty. In a world where magic comes forth from a dance, where pixies, talking bears, and fae abound—Maya uses this magic as the glue to everything: setting, plot and characterization. It is the basis of her world-building and because of the creative and talented way she does it, *Initiate* comes off as highly original, unique and engrossing.

I'm not exaggerating here. World-building. How To. Tara Maya. *Initiate*. Read it.

### **Characterization**

My number one surprise with this book is that this book has guy stuffs in it. I could talk at length how fascinating Dindi is, how she comes across as both vulnerable yet puts aside her fears to do what must be done. How she seems like she is fourteen going on eighteen one moment, and fourteen going on twelve the next. Maya pens her as tenacious and doesn't shy away from giving her a sexuality. Dindi's great.

My little fantasy heart, however, belongs to Kavio.

Because Kavio kicks ass.

Kavio, actually, is a tragic figure. Maya gives him nobility and youthful idealism as his moral fiber, and tosses him into situations of conflict where it becomes apparent that Kavio's greatest enemy is himself. Kavio is a good guy, but he's also a weapon of mass destruction. He follows the rules when obviously he could, quite simply, make up the rules himself with his magic. He's like a Jedi Knight being given a ticket by a traffic cop. Press hard, Kavio, you're making five copies. The cop has a gun and feels superior, but Kavio could turn him inside out, burn his cruiser, go to the station, and have it swallowed whole by a rent in the earth while blood pixies rip out everyone's eyeballs through their noses making the police station scene in *The Terminator* look like a scene from a Jane Austin novel.

Instead, he signs.

Did I mention he's a bad-ass?

As a writer, Kavio fascinates me mightily. I'm beginning to wonder if someone handed Maya an honorary penis because she hones in on the masculine feel of Kavio with laser-like focus. She nails what I call the Tragic Masculine Paradox: when confronted with an attractive young woman coming-of-age, the man of honor is torn with feelings of protectiveness as a father figure yet desires as a lover. You see this in fiction all the time. Rarely do you see it done with such empathy and understatement. Many writers go overboard with this, giving this a tragic (and pervy) element. Maya, however, simply presents it as-is. Kavio has bigger problems than his youthful naïveté.

Dindi's feminine, innocent beauty, simply highlights Kavio's main attraction: Dindi is magically powerful. Without going into the rest of the series, he's slowly falling in love, and love, my friends, is messy. Dindi is more than a girl and then more than a young woman. She's the catalyst to...

But I digress. Dindi isn't the only character in a come-of-age journey in *Initiate*.

### **Plot**

Which leads us to the clever, delicious plotting, and how we come full circle back to our discussion about epic fantasy.

A prevalent, and welcomed trend in speculative fiction is the come-of-age journey set in a fantastic (be it wonderful or dystopian) setting. I am a huge sucker for these types of stories, and in *Initiate*, Maya plots a literal come-of-age journey as Dindi goes out to become a woman, ready or not (and no, she wasn't ready).

But epic fantasy has stakes. Big stakes. End-of-the-world (or worse!) type stakes, but unlike much of what is out there today, this book is surprisingly not a coming-of-age novel with an epic plot line to give the character's punch and excuses to reveal their literary humanity. No, this is a book that provides the foundation for the true story: the battle with the malevolent forces out to crush humanity. It's not exactly *Clan of the Cave Bear* meets *The Lord of the Rings*, but you get the idea.

Dindi is on a personal journey and she yearns to become a magical dancer in the society she was born in. However, if, as a reader, you're paying attention, you can spot the epic plot that Maya is serving up like drops of water to the thirsty.

And this is where we depart the shackles of traditional publishing. Maya fearlessly has plotted out a twelve book series and each book is building on that plot in a relentless, epic fashion. Let me be very clear, I am not a big fan of many-book fantasy series. Many of them have problems with continuity, editing, and, quite frankly, sometimes as a reader, I feel I've been ripped off around book four because I'm being milked rather than being cleverly entertained.

eBooks, and today's book market, however, has expanded the types of books we can find and buy, and Maya's greatest accomplishment as a writer is taking full advantage of medium. The twelve book format, based on her world-building, is not only daring but also a little slice of epic fantasy goodness, and her skill at characterization draws the reader right into her world.

It's epic fantasy by our very definition, and it's yummy. Give me those twelve books. I'll gladly ready every one of them. If you love a good fantasy series fix, Maya's your drug dealer, Baby.

### **More Please**

You can tell I'm a fan. Initiate is a wonderful, rich and diverse book and the series thus far is a fantasy reader's fantasy series. I do have quibbles with it, but they are nits in the larger picture. I'm not a fan of the cover art. I disagree with some of the editorial decisions made and feel Maya's talent could easily support books of larger word counts, smoothing some of the abruptness of the plot presentation.

Yet these are mere nits because from a storytelling standpoint, it just doesn't work, it's a slice of Awesome Toast with Bacon. I tell my non-writer, but reader friends, the Era of the Reader is upon us. Novels like Initiate proves that assertion. If you are a writer, take a step back from all the meta that goes on with writing, look at the bigger picture, and read Initiate. You'll realize the sum of the book is bigger than its parts, and, at its heart, epic fantasy many readers want to buy, but haven't really been able to do so.

I give Initiate four bacon strips out of five. And while this is a singular book recommendation, I'll just drop a teaser that as good as it is, the other books in the series get better.

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## **Mervi says**

The author kindly sent me a review copy.

Dindi is on the verge of womanhood but has not yet taken the Initiation to adulthood. All she wants to do is dance, but in this world dancing is the way to do magic and only those who are good enough to be accepted to the mysterious Tavaedi clan are allowed to dance. As long as anyone can remember, nobody in Dindi's small tribe, the Lost Swan, has become a Tavaedi so her mother, aunts, and cousins are all urging her to become a wife and a mother. But Dindi is determined to succeed and so she steals moments to practice with her faery friends whom only she can see.

Kavio is a trained Tavaedi dancer and "everyone" knows that he broke his tribe's laws. He's on trial and expects to die. Instead he's exiled which is a greater shame to the young man. He leaves his family and sets out to the world where people will either shun him or want to kill him.

Rthan is a warrior of the Water Blue tribe. His wife and daughter were killed on a raid and he tried to get even. Somehow, Kavio prevented the deluge Rthan had conjured with his water spell. Now, Rthan is more eager than ever to get even with the younger man. Also, Rthan can see a shimmering being who has taken the form of his eight year old daughter. The being urges him to take revenge.

Zavaedi Brena is the Healer for the Yellow Bear tribe and she's also a widow with two daughters who are approaching the age of Initiation. Brena wants desperately for them to pass the test and become Zavaedis like herself so that they can lead the life they want to and not be dependent on husbands. So, she teaches them the dances even if it will cost Brena her life if they are caught. Her elder one Gwena seems to learn quickly but the youngest Gwenika claims to be sick often.

Faeath isn't a familiar fantasy medieval world; it's equivalent to Stone Age with a mythical feel. The people don't have horses even though they've heard that other tribes might have them. They don't even have dogs. They have obsidian knives instead of steel weapons. The society seem to be somewhat patriarchal with clear gender roles. Men are warriors and hunters, and women are mothers who cook, clean, and gather food. Dindi's oldest male cousin claims that he is her keeper because she doesn't have a brother. However, otherwise the women characters seem to be independent.

Dindi's a bit different from the usual fantasy heroines. She's lonely and her cousins bully her. She's also often clumsy and her faery friends get her into trouble. But she's also determined and brave. At the start of the story, she gets a pet kitten Puddlepaws. Her mother also loved to dance but she fell in love with her husband before her Initiation and apparently deliberately chose to stay an ordinary woman and stopped dancing. Later in the book, Dindi experiences visions. Although I'm not a fan of visions as a plot device, the POV character in the vision was very interesting to me.

On the other hand, Kavio is pretty standard young man; stubborn, proud, and full of himself. He's also a very powerful Tavaedi. He's the son of his tribe's War Chief and destined to follow him as the next chief. Apparently, a rival for the position had him exiled. Some of the people from his tribe, the Rainbow Labyrinth, would like Kavio to lead them in a revolt. However, Kavio doesn't want to do that.

Rthan is pretty tormented soul on a quest for vengeance. It's interesting to note that this is usual for fantasy main characters but here he's cast more into the role of the antagonist.

Brena is a competent woman (and I enjoy reading about them). Near the end of the book we learn that her marriage wasn't a happy one and so it's natural that she would want to save her daughters from similar fates. She also deals with the fae although not as much as Dindi.

The magic is pretty complex. It's done with dancing and each dancer is attuned to a specific color which represents a certain aspect, healing or rain, for example. However, the dancers also perform (pseudo)historical plays and so preserve history in an illiterate society. They wear colorful masks and costumes during the dancing. Only members of Tavaedi and Zavaedi secret societies can practice magic and dancing. The Tavaedi and Zavaedi have their own villages and seem to be able to marry only each other.

Only dances, and magic, which are known are allowed. It's forbidden to invent new ones and that is why Kavio was exiled.

Faeearth has a plethora of faery races: pixies, naiads, nymphs, sprites... But only people who have magic can see them. Dindi seems to be the only one in her village to see them. They seem to be pretty mischievous and instead of helping Dindi, they get her often in trouble. For example, when Dindi had to make soap and gather blueberries, the faeries offered to help. The result was blueberry soap...

The plot is quite fast paced and the points-of-view shift quickly. The writer doesn't explain much and this was welcome to me, at least, since I've read several book in a row where the writers insist on explaining everything and preferably several times. However, it challenges the reader to be alert for clues about the world and the society. Also, a couple of scenes are written in the second person when describing the Initiation rituals. That might irritate some people.

The plot centers around the Initiation and book ends in a cliffhanger. The book is marketed as romance but there isn't one. Several men and women did meet so its possible that a romance or romances will occur later.

I have only a couple of small quibbles about the setting. For a Stone Age culture, the families were very small. Dindi seems to be an only child even though both of her parents are alive! Brena has only two kids but her excuse is that she's a widow. At the age of 18, Kavio surely should have been already married with kids. Also, there were no dogs. Dogs are among the first animals that humans domesticated simply because they are very useful in hunting, guarding, simply keeping company, and even being able to pull travois. But these are really minor things.

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## **Goblin says**

I was able to get a Kindle copy of this book for free through Amazon. I'm so happy that I picked it up!

The world the author spins is an old and harsh one filled with magic, faeries, struggle, and war. I really loved the idea of weaving magic with a dance. And though people live and die, Maya mentions these things the descriptions are not horribly graphic or off putting. Some times the implied is just enough to make one squirm and feel for a character. I appreciated the changed track from over-description syndrome.

The chapters are nicely broken up and titled with which character we're following as the tale unfolds for our protagonists. And since there are new characters being added in here and there, these are much appreciated cues otherwise, I imagine one would have very easily gotten lost without them.

It took me a chapter or two to really get into the story, and I am very glad that I stuck to it. The book picked up fast and once the momentum of the novel got going the pacing was an entertaining one! I enjoyed the main female character Dindi very much. She's sort of an odd ball, but in an absolutely likable and relate-able way. I can't wait to see what the next book has in store for her.

The only negative I got from this book was the very sudden drop off at the end. It sort of felt like it was chopped awkwardly. Left me wanting at least a segue into the ending.

Although it did make me want to get the next novel right away. Sneakily genius!

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## **Angela says**

10/30/2013 Update: Free on Kindle now!

When I was first offered this book to review, I thought it sounded absolutely fascinating – not quite like anything I'd ever read before. I was definitely right.

The book starts out rather slow. There's a lot of description of the place, the people, the setting. It was a little hard to get into at first, because I was having trouble following the story among all the descriptions.

But it wasn't too far into it that the story really picked up. When Dindi is taken for her Initiation, and Kavio is kicked out of his tribe, everything starts to get interesting.

I could not put my Kindle down. The story flows beautifully, and naturally, from this point forward, and I was up late into the night finishing it.

Dindi is an great character. She dances in secret, she's not supposed to before becoming a Tavaedi, with the fae and wants nothing more than to be able to continue to dance. She's not entirely sure of herself, but she's sweet and kind.

Kavio is something else entirely. He's strong – physically, mentally and emotionally. He willingly takes his punishment as exile, when all he was doing was trying to save his tribe. He fights off those that would do more harm, saves young girls from drowning, and doesn't expect anyone to give him any trust or belief. He

sets out to make his own way – refusing to let that way be less than what he was, he strives for better.

I really loved both main characters, as well as being incredibly interested in a few of the secondary characters we got to know (Gwenika comes to mind immediately). The Corn Maiden – I sure hope we're going to learn more about her!!

The real prize here though, is the world. It's an intricate, beautiful, harsh world. Ancient, ancient times – think Neolithic – with tribes that remind me of the Native American or African tribes of old. Magic and fae still populate the world, and if you have magic you are admitted to an entirely different class of the tribe. The customs and interactions between the tribes were fascinating. I could see the influence of a few different ethnicities and histories, and they were seamlessly woven together into a brand new whole. Honestly, it delighted me.

Tara Maya has given us a beautiful new fantasy world. The Unfinished Song: Initiate will pull you in, immerse you in the people and stark beauty of Faeearth, and leave you wanting more when you're done. I know I definitely can't wait to start The Unfinished Song: Taboo to see what's next for Dindi, Kavio and the rest.

Grade: B

P.S. There is a cliffhanger at the end, but the second through sixth books are out - this is going to be a 12 book series now!

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## **Jessie says**

I won't recap the premise of the story since it's available at the top, so I'll jump right into my review.

The things I liked about this novel were the length, the character development, the writing, and the sequence of events and how they're pulled off. The world building was done alright, but there were a few areas that needed improvement. Some things got confusing at times when I forgot who a character was or wondered who it might be when they hadn't been introduced properly. That was a flaw of this book.

The biggest reason I didn't like this novel is how it ended. I think a series of books can easily be stand-alone novels that build on the world the author introduced in the first novel. This book isn't like that. It ends abruptly in the middle of telling the story, and I strongly disliked that. The author is essentially forcing you to buy the next novel because they cut you off before it reached the climax (seriously, this story has NO climax). It was very unsatisfying, and as a result, I won't read anymore of this author's work.

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