

Monologue from The Echo in Our Walls

(c) Jessica Bellamy

Performed by Maggie Biggs

(to audience)

Are you waiting for a train?

The last one has gone for the day.

There won't be another til tomorrow.

No, I'm not waiting for one. I'm just standing here. It's a good place to think.

Well...maybe not think, so much as remember, and hope really hard.

Two weeks ago I stood here and waved goodbye to Sam. He looked so tall in his army uniform. He was acting brave and strong for me, for his Mum and for his sisters, but I could see his bottom lip was quivering, just a little bit.

He held it together really well, though. Like I knew he would. I tried to hold it together too. I didn't do quite as well.

I thought having an older boyfriend would be wonderful. He might finish at school a little before me, but that would give him time to set himself up in the world. I thought: when I finish school a couple years later, he'll have a solid job, a home partly paid for, and will be ready for us to start our lives together. A 1917 wedding.

I didn't count on a World War breaking out.

Sam was old enough to go to War, and so of course he decided to.

All the young men in town are putting their hands up. It's the right thing to do. There's a rumour that Hay has the highest percentage of men signing up for the Army of any town in the whole country. I believe it.

I can't help but worry, though. That I might never see Sam again. He could get hurt, and want to say one last thing to me, but won't be able to. That breaks my heart. Knowing he might want to, but couldn't get the message out. France to Australia. That's too long a way.

I've given him a picture I drew, to take with him. It's the dinner we had together before he packed up for France.

We're sitting by the banks of the Murrumbidgee. He caught a fish, and we cooked it over a campfire. I will never forget his face, looking square at me, with the reflection of those leaping flames. That's what I drew, and that's what I gave him.

Normally the girlfriend gives her bloke a picture of herself to take to war. But we've always been a bit different to normal people. I had to draw him, because he looked like this big beautiful mixture of brave and scared, and young and old, all at once, and full of love but scared to get too close, in case that hurt me even more in the long run.

I held him in a tight hug and I said, "you are going to come back from the War. We're going to have everything we wanted. I promise you."

I've never had a dinner that tasted so good. Like the care with which he prepared it, the delicate way he cooked it over the flames, with flesh that tasted like fresh water and fire, like life, like love.

I hope he looks at the picture, and it reminds him to fight hard, but to also be careful. He's needed back home. No one makes fish quite like him.

No one ever could.