

EDEN by Kate Gaul

Synopsis

Set in a small rural Tasmanian town in a world before social media, *EDEN* is a lyrical coming-of-age play about friendship, first love and the stories small communities choose not to tell.

Fifteen-year-olds Kit and Dan have grown up together in a valley defined by farms, river country and inherited silence. They spend long summer days escaping into hop fields, sharing pizza in the town square and imagining lives beyond the limits of the place they call home. Beneath the beauty of the landscape, however, lies a community shaped by domestic violence, misogyny, economic hardship and quiet complicity. Kit struggles with her mother's new relationship after her parents' separation, while Dan witnesses the abuse her own mother quietly endures. As their friendship deepens into first love, both begin to recognise that the future offered by the town may not be enough.

Everything shifts when their school bus is stopped at the bridge after the body of a local woman is found caught in the river. Drawn to the water before the adults can intervene, Kit and Dan become witnesses to a death that the town is determined to explain away. Conversations, rumours and half-finished observations accumulate, while familiar reassurances - "nothing like that happens here" - become another way of refusing to look too closely. Kit later glimpses an unidentified man removing old fencing wire near the river, an image that unsettles rather than explains. No one is accused. No answers arrive. Instead, suspicion lingers in the spaces left by silence.

The discovery of the body becomes a catalyst rather than a mystery to solve. Faced with a community that continually asks women to look away, accept less and remain quiet, Kit and Dan reach the threshold of adulthood knowing they cannot remain unchanged.

In its final movement, the play slips beyond linear time, imagining the different lives that might unfold before returning to the moment just before departure. Dan's future remains grounded in the living world. She journeys into Tasmania's south-west, carrying a jar of river water from home - a quiet act of remembrance that keeps her connected to the place she has left behind. Kit's future becomes something more elusive and mythic. Drawn back to the river that has shaped her life, she moves towards a fate that remains deliberately unresolved. Whether she disappears, transforms or simply becomes inseparable from the landscape is left for the audience to decide.

Performed by two actors playing multiple characters, *EDEN* combines naturalistic dialogue with poetic storytelling to explore memory, landscape and the invisible forces that shape young women's lives. Rather than solving its central mystery, the play asks what rivers remember, what communities choose to forget, and whether leaving home is ever entirely possible.