

# *Memories of the Past*



*By Isabelle Flynn*

The paddocks in front of Ally were full of cows. They grazed on the rich green grass, that was still sprinkled with sparkling raindrops after the last night's rain. To the left of her, as far as the eye could see, were orange orchards, with round, juicy fruit ready to be picked. Ally had not come to simply gaze at the cows or to jump the old, rundown fence into the orchard, but to visit her favourite place in the world. The "All Saints Church of Upper Swan", and the tiny graveyard that surrounded it. The All Saints church was just under two hundred years old, but remained as grand as ever. It was a small church, with a basic shape, and a single bell on the top. Behind it was bush land, and when you stand in front of the church you can hear the rushing of a river. The church was built on the top of a hill, looking over more, unusually green fields. Although people had stopped being buried in the grave yard a hundred years ago, Ally felt a kind of aching in her heart, whenever she read the gravestones of the young children who had died.

Mamma arrived back at the church at around four thirty, the usual time. She was in a good mood after her long run, as she found it released some of the stress from her day. Ally had always visited "All Saints". It was a place that was peaceful. A place where she could forget all her worries. A place to simply be Ally, whoever that was.

That very next day at school, Ally was impatient. It had been a draining long day, and she had been practically counting down the minutes until the bell sounded for the past half hour.

'DDDDDDIIIIIIINNNNNNNNGGGGG, DDDDDIIIIIIINNNNNNNNGGGGG,  
DDDDDDIIIIIIINNNNNNNNGGGGG'

Ally walked out slowly from her class. She didn't bother to run like the other year twos. What was the point when you had nothing to run for? Except then Ally began to speed up, remembering her mothers promise to her this morning, "If you hurry home, and don't dawdle I will take you to your little church, just please stop bugging me Allegra, you know it won't help you".

Ally hated it when anyone called her Allegra. Not only because it usually meant that they were angry with her, but it simply didn't suit her. Allegra, meaning happy in Italian, was for the kind of girls who arrived home every day from a normal day of school, with their cheeks hurting from all the smiling. Ally wasn't an unhappy girl. She just preferred keeping to herself and her dark brown eyes were always full of quiet thoughts.

When Ally arrived at "All Saints" that afternoon, she knew at once that something wasn't quite right. The wind blew the trees in a way that made them dance mysteriously as if reaching out to whisper secrets to her. Ally's mum had already ran off down the muddy track, when Max appeared for the first time. He was wearing what looked like a torn top and shorts, but it was too white to properly make out. His face was even paler, but his eyes were the same dark brown as Ally's. The expression on his young looking face, was a mixture of concern and excitement. "I can't believe that this actually worked", Max whispered, almost to himself.

Ally didn't know whether to laugh or cry. A strange feeling gripped at her insides making them feel breakable and weak. "Look Ally please don't pass out on me, I just have one shot to save my remains and my church other wise I'm well, not dead, but in big

trouble". As if to confirm Maxwell's words, Ally's eyes finally focused on the big yellow sign that had been pinned up onto the entrance gate.

ALL SAINTS' CHURCH UPPER SWAN TO BE CLOSED FOR DEMOLITION.  
DO NOT ENTER BUILDING SITE WITHOUT PERMISSION.

"See what I mean Ally, I have watched you come and go for the past four years and I know that this place means almost as much to you as it does to me, you wouldn't let it get knocked down for some apartment blocks." He said, the words coming out in a rush.

"Ummm, excuse me mister, but who are you? Why do you know my name? What even is yours? Why do you look very similar to what I thought a ....gh...."

"A ghost? Well that would be because I am one. Sorry that I have been very rude. My name is Maxwell Ferguson, and I am nine years old, well at least I was nine when I was buried in 1922. Don't ask me any questions about my death please it is a bit of a touchy matter, and the reason I know your name is because your mum always says it." Ally believed him. How couldn't she? Here he was dead proof, and it was easier to believe Max than think herself mad.

"So Max, exactly what am I supposed to do about it", Ally forced out, bringing a smile to the boys pearly white features.

After that day Ally returned every afternoon, once school had finished. Max would always greet her at the front gate, and they would discuss different tactics to prove to the council that the buildings should not go ahead. It took the two children all of three afternoons to think of the most effective way. They decided to write a letter.

It wasn't until Autumn that Ally got a reply. The graveyard was covered with brown and red leaves, and Ally hadn't seen Max for over a month. The sign from the front gate had gone. Without stopping to even think, she flew over to the one grave that Ally had visited the most, urging her feet onwards. At last she was there. If Ally hadn't been frozen to the ground in shock she may have even jumped. Underneath the marble cross were seven tulips, their petals the shade of the night sky, between sunset and twilight. Ally smiled until her cheeks hurt.