



Jerry and The J's Of Johnson's Creek

By Deborah Wassenberg

2. How Come People Have to Die?

All eyes were on Jericho. He was playing a drum solo demonstrating his talent with the sticks while the rest of the musicians in the band looked on. The bass drum was the rhythm keeper while he used the toms and hi-hats to provide the flourishes. The Johnson's Creek Kid's Club kids were jumping up and down and cheering Jericho on. He ended his solo with a final crash of the cymbals. He held his drumsticks in the air and spun around on his stool. And he fell off it.

His hands, still clutching his sticks, appeared over the top of the drum kit.

'I'm okay!' he yelled.

Jerry spoke into the microphone to address the kids.

'That's it for Kid's Club tonight! Thanks for coming and we'll see you next week or at Church on Sunday. God bless you!'

Jax, the band's sound engineer, left the mixing desk and ran down the aisle to the stage.

'Hey, Jericho, you killed it, man!'

'Thanks,' said Jericho.

'Probably not the best way to describe his performance considering the circumstances,' said Jazz, hanging her bass guitar on its stand.

'What do you mean?' asked Jax.

'The funeral? Look behind you, the ladies from the Church are coming in to set up for the repast.'

'What's a repast?'

'That's what they call the light meal after a funeral service,' said Jandi.

Jax turned around and saw a group of ladies, their arms full of bags and boxes, entering the hall through the chaos of kids and parents leaving.

He lowered his voice.

'Sorry,' he whispered. 'I forgot it was Mr Moody's send-off tomorrow.'

'Yeah, he's going to be missed,' nodded Jerry.

'He was such a nice old man,' Jandi sighed.

'Let's load out fast and give the ladies the time they need,' said Jerry.

Jandi looked across at Jericho. 'That was a great drum solo, though, Jericho.'

Jericho's face went red, and he smiled at her.

The J's began the task of packing up their gear. Jerry was surprised when he felt a pull on the back of his shirt. He turned around and saw that one of the kids wanted him.

'Hey Noah, what are you still doing here?'

'I have a question,' said Noah.

'Okay, what is it?' asked Jerry.

'Why do people have to die?'

Noah's question took Jerry by surprise. He looked around at his bandmates. They looked back at him with unease and shrugged. Jerry turned back to Noah.

'That's a great question, Noah,' he said. 'I'll get back to you with the answer. Is that okay?'

Noah nodded. 'Okay,' he agreed and ran out of the hall.

'Whoa,' said Jerry.

'I know who can answer that question,' said Jericho.

'Reverend Mac!' they all cried.

'We'll all be at the Church for the funeral tomorrow,' said Jericho. 'We can ask Reverend Mac there!'

'Okay, J's,' said Jerry. 'See you at the Church.'

Reverend Mac looked out across the Church. Quiet chatter filled the room as friends and family greeted one another to celebrate the life of Mr Moody. Despite his name, he'd been a mild, even-tempered and beloved member of the Johnson's Creek community, and he

would be missed. Reverend Mac checked on Mr Moody's daughter and her family seated in the front pew. He was surprised to see Jerry and The J's blocking his view of them and waving at him.

'Jerry,' whispered Reverend Mac, 'what are you doing?'

'Hi Reverend Mac,' said Jerry, 'I have to ask you something.'

The Church organist struck the first chords of a familiar hymn.

'You have to ask me now? The funeral is about to start.'

'It will only take a second,' Jerry reassured him.

Mourners pushed past The J's to lay a floral arrangement at the altar. Reverend Mac smiled reassuringly at them.

'If I answer your question,' he said, 'will The J's go and find a seat and let me get on with the funeral?'

They all nodded.

'Okay, quick, what is it?'

'Why do people have to die?'

'Human life is temporary,' said Reverend Mac, 'our bodies wear out or get sick. There's a time to be born and a time to die. And for a Christian, dying is the beginning of eternal life in heaven. Death is sad for the family who stays behind because they miss the person who has died, but even if you live to be ninety-five years old like Mr Moody, that's nothing when you compare it to eternity. We must trust God. We rely on Him. Death does not overrule the power of God and cannot upset His plans, so we are not afraid of it. We are in God's hands forever! Now, get going!'

'Thanks, Reverend Mac,' said Jerry, leading The J's down the aisle towards a seat at the back just as Reverend Mac began the funeral.

'We are gathered here to pay respect and to say farewell to a man of God, our brother, Mr Theodore Andrew Moody, and to commit him into the hands of God.'

At Kid's Club the following Friday night, with all traces of the funeral repast cleared away, Jerry was back on stage sharing with the kids.

'Hi, everyone. Last week Noah asked me an important question. Why do people have to die? Adam and Eve disobeyed God, and their sin brought death into the world. Your human body can't keep going forever. But your spirit lives forever! God is always interested in your life here on Earth, but He is far more interested in where you will spend eternity. That's why He sent His Son Jesus into the world to die on the Cross. Jesus died for the sins of the whole world so you could enter Heaven when you die. All you need to do is say sorry to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you and come into your life, and then you know you will go to Heaven when your time comes. Everyone dies, but after that, we live forever!'

Jerry checked his bandmates, gave a nod and played a downstroke on his guitar.

'Come on, everybody, it's time to praise the Lord!'