

JADE'S STORY
a two-way street

Melissa Baker

A BAKER BOOK
Sydney

Published by Melissa Baker

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First published by Melissa Baker Australia 2003. ISBN 1 74018 285 5

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Jade's Story: a two-way street is a true story.
All names contained in the story have been changed.

Front and back cover design: Melissa Baker

Drawings by Ben McKinnon and Melissa Baker

Edited by Bill Baker

Printed and bound by Books and Writers Network, 17 Military Road, Watsons Bay 2030

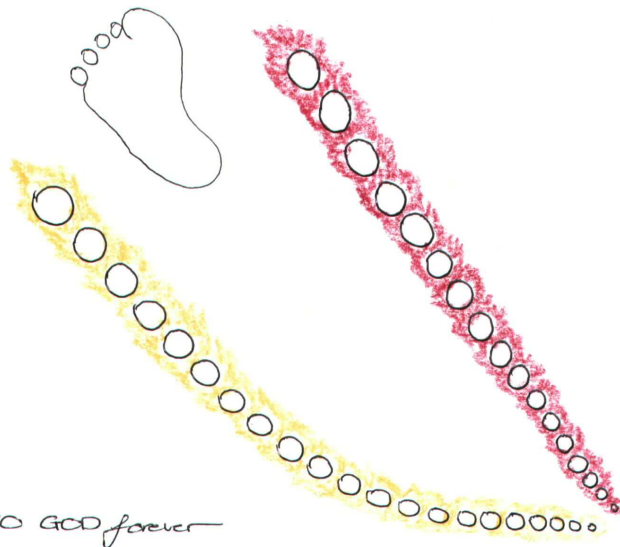
JADE'S STORY

a two-way street

Section 1: Sleeping under the bridge
Jade's story part 1.....13

Section 2: Between bridges
Jade's story part 2.....53

Section 3: Builder of the bridge
Bridge building tools.....91



BE UNTO GOD forever

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following people for the difference they made me in my life. Without their encouragement and concern for me, I may have never made it...

'James' – thank you for accepting me, giving me lots of assurance, love, encouragement and support over these last 13 years.

'Matthew' – thank you for your patience and understanding, for taking me through the worst two years of my life step by step, and for demonstrating the love of Jesus.

'Glen' – thank you for listening and being brave to save my life at a crucial time. Without your support, continuous friendship, hard words, and prayer I definitely know I wouldn't be here today.

'Paul' – thank you for sticking by me as a friend no matter what.

'Kath' – thank you for acting out the will of God via a letter.

'Mr Cones' – thank you for seeing my potential and teaching me early childhood skills all in one year.

More recently, the following people have made a significant impact on my life and my future...

John Reid – through difficult and growth periods in my early ministry years you have been there to encourage me, pray for me, see potential in me, and allow me to learn and investigate who I am and where I want to be. Thank you for all that you have done.

Graeme Chatfield, Bill Leng, Ross Clifford, Michael Frost, Brian Powell, Ken Clendinning – thank you for your encouragement, support and wisdom, and for building in me a foundation for ministry and furthering my education abilities.

Chris ten Broeke, Mary Wood, and Graham Weir – thank you for mentoring me, developing my gifts, and shaping me for pastoral ministry.

My Mother – thank you for taking the time to renew our relationship on our overseas holiday together in 1989 and for the on-going friendship we have now. May this give you a deeper understanding of me.

And for those who made my dream a reality...

Ben McKinnon – we were meant to meet and catch the vision of this project, thanks for sticking through it, and working together to create the songs that we did.

Phil Loone – thanks for believing in me and giving me the encouragement to do my Master of Adult Education and through all those long deep discussions we had you taught me to move from sleeping under the bridge to becoming the builder of the bridge.

Bill Baker – thank you for standing with me on this project, taking the time to edit my words, and encouraging me to keep going even through the difficult times.

John, Chris, Richard, Gordon, Graham, and Bill – thank you for your words of wisdom that you have shared in this book, so that others can also witness the change that is only possible through God.

Foreword

Students look puzzled when I draw their attention to a new optional seminar for them to choose as a part of their Supervised Experienced Based Learning Program (SEBL). What is this all about? They ask. I then point them to something of the dynamics of the seminar that Melissa Baker leads regularly at Morling. I extol her strengths as an adult educator. I mention the story of Jade and some decide to take the risk of signing up. Melissa's seminars are the SEBL seminars I get the most enthusiastic review about from students. The seminars are based on material found in this book.

I have orally shared the story of Jade and now I have read it. It is an account of the human capacity for survival against all odds. I am disturbed by the grim realities of human dysfunction. Delightful insights into the movement from despondency to optimism are to be found in this story and the associated learning experiences. Transformative shifts from poor and destructive attitudes to self to a new ability to take pleasure in personal strengths are Jade's experience and speak into my story. This book speaks about an earthy spirituality, forgiveness and restored core relationships. Here I discover that disappointment and despair do not need to seize human hearts and minds. In Jade's story hope, based on gracious spirituality, chases fear away.

John Reid (2003)

Lecturer of Pastoral and Practical Studies (Morling College, Sydney)

Prologue: who was Jade Michaels?

“No one could have imagined back then the journey Jade would travel or how God would richly bless her.

“Jade’s life story shows how God uses the weak, humble and broken to demonstrate his love and power. Christ's words that those who are last will be first and those who are first will be last (Matthew 19:30) ring true.

“Jade has considerably more depth as a person than anyone would have thought back then. Through God's power, the walls were removed and those deep, hidden parts have been revealed – now blossoming and bearing fruit. I thank God for this.”

Richard Host as ‘Glen’ (a friend)

“When I first met Jade Michaels as a very reluctant client, she had very little idea of who she was – lost in the pain and confusion of rejection, self hatred and despair. Her abilities, talents, gifts, hopes and dreams remained virtually untapped.

“As Jade had spiralled down in hopelessness and self destruction, God reached out and drew her quite miraculously into a network of love and hope. Ironically, in the beginning, Jade was not even aware of God’s leading, protection and provision, as He made sure loving people played key roles in ensuring her survival, and the commencement of a remarkable, deep healing.”

Chris Patchett as ‘Matthew’ (Jade’s counsellor)

Section 1

Sleeping under the bridge



Introduction – <i>Never to know</i>	15
There was silence, when will it end?	16
Life goes on, what's it all about?	21
Boredom, what does it take?	28
Making it to the top, will I or won't I?	37
The betrayal, who can I trust?	40
A two-way street, which side are you?	42
Playing games, who is the enemy?	44
Death has come, shall I open the door?	48
It's a vicious circle, when do I get off?	51

Introduction – *Never to know*

Dense morning fog filled the air. The city, its suburbs and the nearby bushlands were tangled with white puffing fog that leaped into the trees and surrounding buildings. Dawn was soon approaching, but to the onlooker it was still dark. Soon the rush of peak hour would start. The only sound that could be heard was a lone tree frog.

Suddenly bushes were rustling from all sides. Twigs lying on the ground were crushed under the foot of an intruder. If the trees could talk, they would be whispering to each other – “Who’s that? Why is she here? What does she want?”

She ran hurried and confused, almost tripping over herself. Her mind was racing at one hundred kilometres per hour, but her steps only paced at 5. Exhausted she stopped and fell to the ground to catch her breath.

Tears rolled down her cheeks and anger arose in her clinched fists. She will no longer allow anyone to control her. Free is what she would rather be. She ran from her pain. Hiding from the enemy and also herself. Never did she want to face the problems, nor let them control her. She pretended that life was okay and constantly played it for everyone to see. A passer-by would never notice her sullenness and dismal life, but perhaps an observer could see through the masked face, drawing deep into her wounds and the sadness she so often felt. If only she could fly, to escape from her miserable existence.

After catching her breath, she looked around. The bushland was silent. There was no breeze. No noises. Not even a whistling bird. The same tree frog croaked. If she had energy to move, the noise would have made her bolt.

She slowly got up. She wasn’t in a hurry. Looking around, she noticed a cave. It was a dark cave with water running down the sides and endless tunnels. She entered unaware of what might be lurking.

It was easy to lose the way. There was no easy exit. She had no map, no lighting, and no easy solution. It was like the entangled web of life. Full of tunnels, cobwebs, rats, racing watercourses, drainage holes, wild storms, slippery mud, and small chasms. She was running scared. Running away from something that engulfed her and she never wanted to return. She became bitter, dirty, full of hatred, and a girl who was tough on the exterior and weak in the centre.

Will anyone be able to find her?

In the dismal cave, she took an unforgettable turn that buried her. There was nowhere else to go. The walls threatened to enshroud her and the air was intensely scarce. Death swept in and out of the cave a number of times and it stared right into her face. Many times she stood motionless and stared back.

Slowly the sun moved down towards the land. Different colours filled the sky. Night soon approached. The day was about to end. Who took notice of this girl, Jade Michaels? Peeping through the keyhole of life, what do you see that encapsulates this girl’s life?

Two long treacherous years were about to begin, stuck in this filthy exasperating cave.

1



There was silence, when will it end?

The blue blackness seemed endless in the night sky. It dangled above in a vast ambience of glittering lights over a place called home. It seemed like an ordinary Tuesday night, but reality was soon to hit.

Deep in the north of Sydney was one house. It was a house that was filled with joy, trust, love, and friendship. It was a place that was engaging and offered peace through rather arduous times. Friends sat around a crowded room filled with laughter and happiness. They all felt close to one another and often spent time in this pleasing place.

On this particular Tuesday evening, friends gathered. It was an opportunity to escape from the adversities of this world, to forget the past and move on to a higher reality. It was a time to share special moments with genuine friends, to ease the agony, hoping that it would dwindle away to nothing. It was also a time of learning and discovering about oneself.

Jade Michaels was a young impressionable girl, who sat amongst these friends, week after week. Jade was tall and inviting, out-going and mysterious all at once. On the outside, Jade seemed happy, but if you really knew her heart, she was crying out for help. On this particular night, like other nights, she had her fair share of problems that were mainly caused by family. Life never seemed hopeful for Jade, but she was going to make it because of the strength of her character and her need to succeed.

No matter how anyone felt at that time, they all enjoyed each other's company. They had many laughs, pleasant times, and paramount to anything else, they developed a close bond. In particular, Jade was close to Glen and Paul. They were two friends that would look after her no matter what. They were two friends that would go out of their way to provide the very thing Jade needed at the time, whether that was a lift, a long talk (known as a D&M), or a reprimand. They loved Jade no matter what she did, what she was like, and in the end it was this love that brought her home. They never judged her, well at least never showed judgment, and never turned their back on her. They indeed were true friends.

Glen lived with his parents in this tranquil house. He gave many hours to developing friendships, donated time to his God and church, and engaged in conversations about computers, music, and jokes. Glen loved telling jokes. His laugh was indescribable. But even when he laughed, just the laugh itself would cause Jade to smile. Glen grew up in a loving home with parents who adored him and taught him respect, love, trust and care. He exhibited these qualities within himself, to others, and to his family. Glen was ten years older than Jade, but still he had time to be her friend. While other so-called friends never seemed to have time for her. He was a friend that was admired deeply for his honesty and sincerity.

From the distance, laughter and on-going chatter could be heard. Neighbours, at this time every week, if they listened, would want to know more about these people and their habits on a Tuesday night. Each week, it would have sounded intriguing, a place that many people would not often experience – a place of energised learning, friendship and laughter. It was a good thing that Jade got to experience a small part of these evenings, so that the memories could live on in her mind through the torment she was about to undergo.

The night was about to end. Endings have always been harder for Jade. For others, they never saw it as an ending, but rather a continuous joy that they know they will experience again soon. For Jade, she knew that moments like these never lasted forever. She realised that maybe one day she wouldn't be meeting her friends at the usual place. Confronting the problems in her life seemed to be rising above the levels of human capability. Panic set in her heart. Jade had fear in her eyes. Something was up. She would make any excuse to stay at Glen's. Paul suspected she was scared of something, but he could not work out what it was. Lies would unravel before her, as though she was completely oblivious of what came out of her mouth. The truth was buried deep within her somewhere. If only someone took the time to look closely.

Both Paul and Glen found it difficult to detach the lies from what really went on inside her. Piece by piece they were working it out, but for now, they knew that being her friend was far more important. Others in the room did not even bother to know or bother to care if something troubled Jade.

"Come on Jade, I'll drive you home." Paul said in a friendly spirit.

"Nah. I'll stay here thanks." Jade replied facetiously.

Glen overheard and abruptly said, "No you won't". Then in love Glen said, "I'm sorry Jade, you can't stay here. We go through this most weeks..."

"I know I'm sorry." Jade spoke to her shoes.

"What's wrong with leaving?" Glen asked.

Jade stood up and sullenly said, "Just leave it. Okay?"

Glen decided not to leave it, but rather to push the point. "Why don't you want to go home? What happens when you get home? What is it with you? You can tell us."

A silence filled the room. Everyone else had left. The same story each week, Paul and Jade are the last to leave. If Paul doesn't come, Jade wanders off in the night. No one knows what she gets up to. It was just one of Jade's little secrets. If Jade never came, they often wondered what happened to her. The others in the group speculated about all sorts of things, anything from a new boyfriend to getting drunk somewhere. No one had actually ever encountered Jade drunk, but at times, they were suspicious of her actions. Nonetheless, Glen and Paul were there to stick up for her and told the others to keep their suspicions to themselves. The others were correct.

Glen and Paul were waiting for an answer, in fact, more like a breakthrough. Each day they prayed for her, each day they hoped that one brick would come off the wall. Every

time they met they hoped that Jade would be bubbling with her usual personality, but without the facade and the lies.

“Okay.” Tormenting them. “It’s just...it’s just...it’s nothing. Nothing to worry about.” She looked down feeling sorrowful. The joy that she experienced a few minutes ago had already worn off. “Drive me home then. I suppose it’s late and you boys have an early start.” Jade said trying to get the attention off herself.

Glen and Paul looked disappointed. They thought it would have been a true miracle if she really divulged the truth!

This time Glen wanted to have the last word. “Jade, if we don’t know what you’re going through, how are we supposed to help you? We want to be there for you.” Glen felt he wasn’t getting anywhere. “Look, let me ask you a question, which you can go away and think about.”

Glen turned around to Paul to get his support. Paul nodded.

Jade sits back down again and said cheekily with hand gestures, “Okay, the floor’s all yours.”

Glen searches for the right words, “How long will you go through life without anybody really knowing you? And you knowing anybody else? Or come to think of it, you knowing yourself? How long?”

Jade sat on the leather couch pondering the questions. After a couple of minutes she stood up and said, “C’mon Paul, take me home.”

Glen looked at Paul, who shrugged his shoulders, wondering if she heard anything. “Jade did you at least listen to what I said?”

Jade kept walking down the short corridor to the wooden door. She opened it and looked back over her shoulder into Glen’s eyes. She stated seriously. “Glen, that was four questions, not one.” Jade walked down the path, under the overgrown plants, to Paul’s car parked out on the street.

Paul turned around in the corridor, poked Glen in the stomach and said, “She’s got you their mate. But at least you know she heard.” Paul walked out of the house, under the same overgrown plants, and chuckled to himself, thinking that Jade is quite intelligent when she wants to be.

Glen was left on the step at the front door in deep thought.

* * *

Paul would often drive Jade to places, since she was not old enough to drive. Paul, like Glen, was around ten years older, was quiet and charming, and never said a harsh word about anyone. He would do anything for Jade. Some months earlier, after a Saturday night movie with the Tuesday night group, he went to drive Jade home. Jade pleaded and pleaded with him. She even threatened to go and hitch a ride with a stranger, rather than be driven home. Paul kept on insisting that home was the best place to go. Jade screamed at him and said no. Turning away she walked straight out on the street to hitch a ride. With her thumb out, a car stopped almost immediately. Paul, who was

timid and meek, courageously went up to the driver and said 'sorry she's with me', and pulled Jade away from the car. Jade seemed impressed and thought that Paul didn't have it in him. Paul then grabbed her wrists and dragged her towards his car. He was not hurting her; in fact she seemed to enjoy it.

Once in the car, Paul told her in a stern voice that he was taking her home. Jade appealed. Paul erupted, turned the engine off, and demanded Jade to tell him what was so terrible about going home. Jade first acted silly and tried to laugh it off. But Paul continued to be stern and serious. Jade then got nervous and felt trapped. She didn't know what to do. Sitting in silence inside Paul's car on a busy road, Paul waited for a response. Jade waited for him to get tired of being so firm. They sat in the car in complete silence for a whole hour.

Paul eventually said, "I can sit here all night if you want. We're not going anywhere until you tell me the truth. Now, why don't you want to go home?"

Jade mumbled with her arms crossed, "It's a long story. And you don't care anyway." Jade always pushed her true friends away by telling them that they don't care or love her, because she could never accept the fact that someone actually did.

Paul shakes his head and then it drops into his hands. While trying to stay calm Paul said, "I do care about you. If I didn't care, I wouldn't be here. I want to try and help you. I want to know why these things are so difficult for you. I want to...just help you. Because I do care."

"I ran away tonight", said Jade under her breath. Very quietly and seriously she continued, "My Dad wouldn't let me go out. He locked me in my room, without any dinner. He...He...So I just opened my window from my bedroom and ran out the front. Then you came to pick me up. That's why I was halfway down the street. That's why I have this small backpack with me. Paul, I can't go home."

"Okay. I'm sorry. I don't completely understand why. I don't have to know. Unless you want to talk about it?"

Jade shakes her head.

"Well then, where do you want to go? Have you a relative to stay with?"

That night, Paul drove for two hours before he reached his own home. He went beyond the call of duty for a friend. But at least in his mind, he knew that she was safe. He couldn't stop wondering why she was so scared to go back home. Why did she run away? He seemed to remember that she did that often. Why? What was she going to say about her father and then withdrew hastily? As he pulled in the driveway to his own parents' home, he smiled and contemplated that at least one brick had come off the wall.

Returning to this particular Tuesday night, now 1am Wednesday morning, Paul recalled that night, a couple of months ago, when Jade ran away from home. Here they are again sitting in Paul's car, but this time outside her home. For two hours they sat talking in the car. Even though Paul felt so tired, he enjoyed their long D&Ms. Three in the morning, Jade disappeared up the driveway. Paul waited until she reached the door.

He always made sure she was safe. He was a true gentleman. Little did he know what was about to emerge. He couldn't save her now. No one could; it was up to her.

Paul drove off into the distance to take refuge in his peaceful home, the exact opposite to the situation that Jade was about to encounter. When she arrived at the door, the keys rattling, she awoke her drunken father, who lay asleep alone in the blackness of the house. Jade swiftly opened the front door. As she gazed up into the darkness of the hall, she heard a sound in the air and still hears that click today.

Jade screamed, "Dad, it's me. Jade. Put the gun down."

Jade's father stood there swaying from side to side, hardly able to stay upright, with an old pistol in his right hand, pointing the weapon of defence straight at her heart.

Jade tried to close the door and move past the obstacle. But he was determined to kill the intruder. He failed to appreciate that it was his youngest child. Or did he? Jade continued to raise her voice in her defence. What else could be said? The yelling match continued for a gruelling ten minutes.

Finally, Jade punched him in the jaw; the strong and heavy drunken man fell to the floor. The silence of death still remained in his hand. Jade emptied the bullets and left him to sleep it off. All she could think of as she locked the front door behind her, against any real intruders, was getting safely to her far away corner of the house, where no one could touch her.