

The fifth in the Johnny and Kate series....



Flight 103

Kate rolled over in bed early that Monday morning after the alarm sounded. She hit the snooze button, rolled over and snuggled up to John. "Morning," she whispered, sweetly.

Still half-sleeping, Johnny automatically put his arm around Kate and pulled her close to him. She rested her head on his chest and closed her eyes again.

A few minutes later the alarm sounded once more. Kate groaned and rolled back over to hit the snooze again. As she rolled over, so did Johnny, wrapping his arm around Kate's waist, pulling her body close to his.

"You sure you don't want me to drive you?" Johnny murmured as he kissed her cheek.

"No, Roy said he wouldn't mind taking us."

"Well, you probably should get up, you don't want to be late."

"Mmm, I don't want to move." She pulled his arm around her more tightly. She laid there until the alarm went off again and then she reluctantly slipped out of John's arms and out of bed.

Shortly after Kate finished getting ready, Johnny got up and dragged himself into the bathroom. He didn't have to be at work for another two hours, but he wanted to say goodbye to Kate. After all, he wouldn't see her for almost a week.

"Everything packed?" he asked as he walked into the kitchen.

"Yep. All packed," she answered as she handed him a glass of juice. "There's a hot dish in the fridge for you."

"Thank you." He kissed her on the cheek and took a big swig of juice.

"That must be Roy and Joanne," he said when the doorbell rang. He walked over to the door and opened it.

"Hey Roy. Morning, Joanne."

"Morning," Roy said as he stepped inside.

"Morning, John."

"Hey Joanne! Are you ready for this?" Kate asked from the kitchen, smiling broadly.

"You bet. But I don't think Roy is. He doesn't exactly enjoy my mother's company, but who else is going to take care of the kids when I'm gone and he's working?" Joanne looked at Roy out of the corner of her eye, with a smirk on her face.

Johnny laughed. "It's going to be an interesting week, huh Roy?"

"Yeah, interesting," Roy replied dryly. He looked at his watch. "Well, we'd better get going if we're going to get there on time."

Kate walked up to John and laid her hands on his chest as he wrapped his arms around her waist. "I'll call you Thursday night," she told him, softly.

"Okay. Have fun." He gently pulled Kate towards him for a hug. "Love you," he whispered into her ear.

"Love you more," she whispered back.

Roy looked over at Joanne, who was smiling. She caught Roy looking at her and she mouthed, *'They're so cute!'*

Roy just rolled his eyes and picked up Kate's bags.

"Hey, Roy. Let me help you with that," John said.

"John, don't forget to tell the Cap I might be a few minutes late this morning, depending on traffic."

"No problem." John helped load Kate's suitcases into the back of Roy's car. "Have a good trip," he said as he kissed his wife. "Have fun! Say 'Hi' to your mom and dad for me!"

"Okay! I'll talk to you Thursday!" Kate said as she climbed into the back seat of the car.

John watched Roy, Joanne and Kate drive away until the car turned the corner and he could no longer see them. Then he turned and went back inside. He knew he'd be lonesome for Kate for the next five days. The only consolation was that he would be working most of the time, which would keep him occupied.

Roy walked into Station 51's kitchen at 8:05 a.m.

"Hey Roy, you made good time! Did they get off okay?" John asked.

"Yeah, traffic was good and the flight was right on time."

John poured Roy a cup of coffee and handed it to him. "Thanks for taking them to the airport."

"Well, it gave me a chance to get away from my mother-in-law."

"Trying to avoid her already, huh?" John grinned. "The week hasn't even started."

"Yeah, I know," Roy replied, staring down into his cup.

"You know Roy," said John, matter-of-factly, "you're lucky that we're working most of the week. That'll give you minimal time with Joanne's mom."

"Uh huh. And *you're* lucky we're working most of the week, too."

John looked puzzled. "Why do you say that?"

"Because you're whipped," he said, bluntly, with a smirk on his face.

John straightened up and looked at his partner in shock. "I'm *what?* Me? Ha! *I am not—*," John didn't get a chance to finish his sentence as the claxon interrupted him. "We'll talk about *that* later!" John told Roy as they ran to the squad.

Thursday night the phone rang at about 8:00. John ran to grab it knowing it'd be Katie. "Hello?"

"Hi. It's me," the other voice said softly.

John smiled upon hearing Kate's voice. "Hi, sweetie. Are you having fun?"

"Uh huh. We've been having a great time. Today Mom and Dad took us for a drive in the country. We showed Joanne Grandma and Grandpa's farm and the old country churches. I think she really enjoyed it. I know *I* did."

"That's great. I'm glad you got to go home."

"Me, too. I've missed everything here so much. And I've missed Mom and Dad."

"I miss *you*," John told her.

"I miss you, too. I wish you could have come with."

"I know. Me, too. But I just didn't have enough time to get a vacation request in. Next time, okay?"

"Cross your heart?"

"Yep. I promise."

"Okay. I'm holding you to that!" She smiled. "John, are you going to be able to pick us up on Saturday?"

"No," he said, disappointed. "I couldn't get anyone to work for me. But Roy said that Joanne's mom would pick you up."

"So that means I won't see you until Sunday, right? You don't have to work Sunday, do you?"

"Nope. I have Sunday off and I've reserved the whole day just for you."

"Mmm, I can't wait. John?"

"What?"

"Do you know what Saturday is?" she asked quietly.

John thought for a second. "No, should I?"

"It's our anniversary."

"Anniversary? It's not our anniversary," he said, cautiously.

Kate just rolled her eyes. She thought Johnny would remember, but apparently she was wrong.

"What anniversary?" John repeated.

"I'll give you until Saturday to figure it out," she teased. "I better hang up now. I'll see you Sunday, right? Or maybe I'll see you Saturday, that is if Sylvia feels like driving us to the station after we get in."

"That would be great. Hope I see you Saturday."

"Me, too. Well, I'd better go."

"Okay. I love you."

"Love you, too," Kate replied and then slowly hung up the phone. It had barely been four days since she'd left California and she already missed John terribly.

John hung up the phone thinking about what Kate might've been referring to when she said that Saturday was their anniversary. He should've known what she was talking about, but all he could think was, *'What anniversary?' Oh man, I'm going to be thinking about this the rest of the week now!*

Saturday finally rolled around and Marco and John were in the locker room getting ready for their shift.

"Morning, John. Hey, Marco," Roy said as he strolled into the locker room that morning.

"Hey, Roy. How's home life?" Marco asked as he buttoned his shirt, grinning at John.

"Very funny. Let's just say I can't wait until tonight," Roy replied as he opened his locker.

John looked up from the bench he was sitting on tying his shoes. "Yeah, tell me about it. You know, when I talked to Kate Thursday night she said something about today being our anniversary. I have no idea what she was talking about."

"Anniversary, huh? You didn't get married on this day. Am I right?"

"Right. I just have no idea what she's talking about."

"Well, you know women," said Marco, he said as he shut his locker.

"Man, this has been bugging me all week."

"Well, why didn't you just *ask* her what today is?" asked Roy.

"And let her think that I've forgotten? That's not a good idea, Roy." John shook his head and continued tying his shoes. "Man, and I thought you were an expert on marriage."

Roy looked at Marco and rolled his eyes.

Station 51's first call of the day wasn't until almost eleven o'clock that morning. It wasn't until almost three o'clock when the engine and the squad returned to the station. The guys came back dirty and tired after fighting a two-alarm house fire.

"Man, I'm beat!" exclaimed Chet as he plopped himself down on a chair in the kitchen. "Whose turn is it to make dinner?"

"Mine," said Stoker, wearily.

"Well, Stoker, you'd better get on it. We missed lunch and I'm starved!"

"I'm not starting anything until I get a shower and a change of clothes."

After the guys cleaned up and put on clean uniforms, they all pitched in to help Mike with dinner. Afterwards, John, Roy and Marco laid down while the Captain, Stoker and Chet relaxed in the television room. Everyone was completely exhausted.

The claxon sounded again shortly after dinner. This time the call was for the squad only. Roy and John were gone on the run for a couple of hours before they returned. When they walked into the kitchen all of the guys were sitting around the television—they hadn't had a run since dinner.

"Man, I need some coffee. I am exhausted!" Johnny said as he walked into the kitchen and over to the stove. He poured a cup and handed it to Roy and then poured a cup for himself.

Totally worn out, John and Roy sat down by the table and drink their coffee. "I am beat!" John exclaimed. "I hope we don't have another call for a *long* time."

"Yeah, that'd be nice," said Roy.

"You know, Kate and Joanne should be in LA by now," John said, looking at his watch. It was almost eight o'clock. "You're sure your mother-in-law is going to get to the airport on time?" John was anxious to see Kate; he'd missed her more than he had thought he would this last week.

"That's about the fourth time you've asked me that today. She said she'd be there on time."

John held up his hands. "Okay, okay. I won't ask anymore. Geez!"

When the phone rang, John quickly jumped up to answer it despite his fatigue, thinking it might be Kate. "LA County Fire Department. Gage speaking." It was Joanne's mother on the other end of the line and her voice was anxious.

"John! This is Sylvia. Have you heard?"

"Hi, Sylvia. Have I heard what? Are you still at the airport?"

"John, you and Roy need to come out here!"

John looked over at Roy and tried to speak calmly into the phone. "Sylvia, just calm down. Now tell me what's going on."

"They just told us that the plane can't land!"

"What do you mean the plane can't land?"

After that question all eyes in the room were on John. The Captain got up from his chair and walked over to John.

"I don't know! It just can't land! There's a problem with it!"

John took a deep breath. "Okay, Sylvia. Now just calm down and tell me what you know," he said as he looked at the Captain and then at Roy.

"They just told us that they're having mechanical problems with the plane and that they can't land! John, can you and Roy come out here?"

John's eyes grew big. "Sylvia, are you *sure* it's their plane?"

Roy immediately sprang from his chair and hurried over to John. "What's going on?"

"Yes! I've been asking questions and I'm not getting any answers. John, I've got the kids here with me and I'm scared. Can you and Roy come?" she asked again.

"We'll be right there, Sylvia. We'll leave right now. Okay?"

"Thank you, John!"

"We'll be there as fast as we can," John reassured her.

"What's wrong?" Roy repeated as John hung up the phone.

John headed towards the door. "Come on, Roy! We've got to get to the airport. Sylvia said that they're having problems with Kate and Joanne's plane and that they can't land it."

John and Roy turned back towards the Captain; he had almost forgotten to ask if they could leave. "Cap?" asked John.

The Captain motioned them towards the door. "Go! Go! Don't worry about it!"

Roy and John ran out of the station to John's Rover and they sped out of the parking lot towards the airport.

Inside the station each of the guys sat quietly, hoping and praying that, for Johnny and Roy's sake, everything would be alright.

John and Roy got to the airport as quickly as they could. Once they arrived at the gate they saw Sylvia and the kids right away.

Roy forced a smile for his kids. "Hi you two."

"Hey rug rats!" John said as the Roy's kids ran up to them.

"Hi Daddy! Hi Johnny! What are you doing here?" Jennifer asked, excitedly.

Roy cleared his throat and looked at Sylvia. She mouthed, *'They don't know.'*

Roy looked back at his children. "We came to meet your mom and Kate."

"Mommy's plane is late," said Jennifer.

"I know, sweetie. That's why Johnny and I came—so that Grandma can take you home and feed you. It's way past dinner-time."

"I thought you had to work," said Chris.

Roy ruffled his son's hair and smiled. "That's right. I did. But I got someone to cover for me. Chris, Jen—Grandma's going to take you home and Johnny and I are going to stay here and wait for Kate and your mom."

"Aw," they both complained.

"Now Grandma's going to take you home and that's all there is to it. Besides, John and I want to surprise Kate and Mommy."

"A surprise!" Jennifer exclaimed. "Can't we stay and watch?"

John shoved his hands in his pants pockets and turned away. He couldn't bear watching this scene between Roy and his kids.

"No, Jen," Roy said firmly. Roy looked back up at his mother-in-law. "Sylvia, we'll call you later, okay?"

"Okay, Roy. Come on, kids. Let's get going; it's time for dinner. I'll make you anything you want, okay?"

"Spaghetti!" Chris announced.

"Yeah!" Jennifer chimed in.

"Spaghetti it is," said Sylvia.

"Bye, Johnny! Bye, Daddy!" Chris and Jen both hollered.

"Bye! Be good for Grandma!"

John turned around, smiled and waved at them. "Bye."

Roy and John watched as Sylvia left with the kids. Once they were out of sight John turned to Roy. "You okay, Roy?"

"Not really," he said, as he ran his hand over his face.

John put his hand on Roy's shoulder. "Let's go see what we can find out." John walked up to the desk at the gate. "Excuse me, but our wives are on Flight 103. Can you tell us why the flight is late?"

"What are your wives' names?" she inquired.

"Joanne DeSoto and Kathryn Gage."

The attendant checked her computer to verify that they were actually on the plane. "I'm sorry, Sir. There's nothing I can tell you at the moment. However, I can have someone come down and talk to you in a bit."

John clenched his jaw and looked over at Roy in frustration.

Roy stepped up to the desk and calmly demanded, "We would like to talk with someone *now*."

"Sir, you'll just have to be patient. Please," she insisted.

John was getting angry now and his voice became louder and more agitated. "Listen, Ms.—," John looked at her name tag, "Listen, Ms. Spencer, we want to talk to someone *right now* who can tell us what's going on. And I am *not* taking no for an answer." John jabbed his index finger on top of the desk to emphasize his point. "Am I making myself clear?" He was not going to take any bullshit from anyone when his wife might be in danger.

Flustered, the woman told them, "I'm sorry. Let me see if I can find someone for you. Can I have your names please?"

"John Gage and Roy DeSoto," he said as he pointed to their nametags they were still wearing.

The woman picked up the phone and dialed nervously. After a minute of conversation with someone at the other end of the line, she told John and Roy, "Someone will be right over to talk to you."

Roy stood by the window and John paced nervously as they waited. After about 10 minutes John saw a man approach the attendant's desk and the woman pointed over to John and Roy.

"Roy, someone's here," John said.

The man walked over to John and Roy. "Mr. DeSoto? Mr. Gage?"

"I'm John Gage. This is Roy DeSoto," John said, gesturing to his friend.

"Hello John. Hello Roy," he said, shaking their hands. "I'm Bill Johnson."

"Mr. Johnson, our wives are on Flight 103 and we're not getting any answers as to what's going on. We want to know what is going on," John demanded.

"Would you follow me, please?"

John looked at Roy, clenching his jaw again. *Were they ever going to just get a straight answer?* They followed Mr. Johnson down the terminal. They finally stopped at a door where Mr. Johnson took out his key ring to open it, revealing a large lounge. "Please have a seat."

After everyone was seated, Mr. Johnson took a deep breath. "Mr. Gage, Mr. DeSoto, basically, what it boils down to is this: The plane is having difficulties with its landing gear. Only one of the landing gears is locking into position. Right now, the pilot is circling the city, burning up fuel, before he lands the plane."

Roy's eyes got big. "No landing gear? So that means that the plane would hit the runway when it tries to land."

"Well, *one* of the landing gears *is* functioning correctly," he repeated. "The computers indicate that the others are not locking, but the computers may be wrong. They may be locked and the computer may be in error."

John took in a deep breath and let it out. "So, how long will it be before they land?"

"The plane will be circling for about another two hours before they attempt a landing."

John looked at Roy. "So, I guess this means we just wait."

Roy swallowed hard. "Yeah, just wait."

"Let me just assure you that this has happened before and planes have landed uneventfully."

"But you can't *guarantee* that," John disputed, staring this man in the eye. He didn't like this one bit. His wife was up in that plane. He didn't care about other planes; he cared only about *this* plane.

"No, I can't." Mr. Johnson said, clearing his throat. "Um, Gentlemen, we do have another lounge for you to wait in, if you'd like."

"Is that where the other families are at?" Roy asked him.

He nodded his head. "Yes."

Roy and John were led down the terminal to yet another lounge where a key was needed to enter. This room was even larger. When Roy and John stepped in the room and looked around they saw over 100 people; some of them were crying and already grieving. It was clearly a room where people waited on the fate of their loved ones after an air disaster.

John and Roy stood in the doorway like deer caught in the headlights of an oncoming vehicle.

"Roy, I can't wait in here."

"Me neither."

Mr. Johnson saw John and Roy's apprehension when they entered the room and he overheard their comments. "Would you like to go back to the room we were just in and wait there?"

John nodded. "Yes, I think that would be better," he said somberly.

John and Roy were led back to the first room and were left alone. For awhile, each sat quietly, immersed in their own thoughts. John got up, looked out the window and up into the sky, wondering if he could see the plane Kate was in—but it was cloudy and he couldn't see anything. He turned around and looked at Roy who was sitting with his head in his hands.

"Roy? Are you okay?"

No answer.

"I'm sure they'll be fine, Roy. Now, don't you go thinking the worst on me because it's *not* going to happen." John was desperately trying to convince himself of this, too.

Roy shook his head from side to side and said quietly, "I don't know what I would do without Joanne. She's everything to me. I couldn't live without her."

"Yeah, I know. But you can't think that way, Roy."

"That's easy for you to say. You don't have two kids at home waiting for their mother," Roy snapped.

John was caught off-guard by Roy's remark. He didn't know what to say. But he knew that they both were completely exhausted physically, mentally and emotionally.

"I'm sorry," Roy said as he looked down at his hand and played with his wedding ring.

"It's okay, Roy. We're both tired. Hell, we're both scared to death." John turned towards the windows again and stared up into the sky with tears stinging his eyes. *At least you have kids. You have something to remember her by—you have something that's part of her.*

After an hour of waiting someone came in with food, but Roy and John had no desire to touch any of it—they had no appetite even though they hadn't eaten for over 5 hours.

John didn't know what to do with himself; he had already paced a pattern in the rug. *'You've got to try to calm down!'* he kept telling himself. He realized that his anxiousness was probably not helping Roy in his attempt to cope with the situation, so he laid down on the couch and rested his arm on his forehead to try to relax. John had laid there only a few minutes before he dozed off.

He dreamt of Katie. He and Katie were in a park with two small children—a girl and a boy. The children were playing on a swing set and John and Kate were in an embrace, happily watching these two children—*their* children.

"I love you, Katie," John told her and kissed her on the lips.

"I love you more," she replied brushing the hair off his forehead. "But I have to go now, Johnny."

"Where are you going?"

"I have to go away. Take care of yourself for me."

Kate slipped out of John's embrace and started to walk towards the children, holding her hands out to

them.

"Katie, don't go yet," John pleaded.

The children left the swing set and walked over to their mother. Kate took each child by the hand and kept walking away.

"Katie! Don't go yet! Please come back!" John begged. "I love you!" John wanted to run after her, but his legs wouldn't move.

Kate turned around and smiled. "I love you, John." She and the children continued walking until John couldn't see them anymore.

John's body jerked, waking him up from this nightmare. It took him a minute to get his senses together and remember where he was. He swung his legs over the side of the couch, took a deep breath, let it out and ran his hand over his face.

"Are you okay? You were talking in your sleep."

John simply shook his head.

Roy understood. He understood completely.

Earlier that day.....

"Ladies and gentlemen, this is the Captain Miller. We are now at a cruising altitude of 30,000 feet. I will be turning off the seat belt sign. Feel free to move about the cabin."

When she heard that announcement, Kate unbuckled her seatbelt and politely excused herself past the husband and wife that were sitting in the two seats next to hers. She walked down the aisle towards the back of the plane where Joanne sat.

"Hey, Joanne. How are you doing?" Kate asked as she knelt in the aisle next to Joanne. Kate knew that Joanne was afraid of flying.

"Okay—so far," Joanne replied, smiling weakly. "Taking off is always the worst part."

"I wish we could've gotten seats together," Kate complained. "I just don't understand it; our reservations were made at the same time. I'm really sorry." Kate looked around the cabin, which was full. "And it doesn't look like there's any open seats either so that we could move."

"It's okay. Really, I'll be fine."

"You sure?"

"I'm sure," Joanne reassured her. Flying didn't bother her once the plane was gliding smoothly in the air.

"Okay. Well, I'd better get back to my seat. Looks like there's some people that want to get through the aisle. Hang in there, okay?" She squeezed Joanne's arm.

"Yeah. See you later."

Kate walked back up the aisle to her seat and settled in for the rest of the flight. Joanne and Kate's seats weren't even remotely close to each other—her seat was up near the wings by the window, whereas Joanne's seat was back by the tail along the aisle.

A few hours later the Pilot came on over the speakers again. "Ladies and gentlemen, we are beginning our descent into Los Angeles International Airport. Please return to your seats and fasten your seatbelts in preparation for landing. Flight attendants, prepare for landing."

Joanne anxiously buckled her seat belt. The second worst part about flying, after taking off, was landing.

Kate was buckling her seat belt at the same time. She looked at her watch—it was 6:45 p.m. *Right on time.* She sat back and watched out the window as the plane descended into Los Angeles. As the plane lowered towards the runway all of a sudden the engines were gunned and the plane's nose went up. Many of the passengers screamed as the plane suddenly climbed back into the air.

Kate looked around the cabin at the other passengers. Everyone was clearly alarmed. *What's going on?* The woman seated next to Kate was screaming and her husband was trying to comfort her.

Joanne saw the aisle of the plane going back up at a sharp angle. *What's happening?* She gripped the armrests, her knuckles turning white.

The airplane was soon back up in the air and it eventually leveled out again. During this time Kate heard what she thought was the landing gear being dropped again and again and again. After a long twenty minutes, the Pilot finally came on over the Intercom. "Ladies and Gentlemen, we are having some difficulties with our landing gear. We should get this resolved soon. I ask that everyone please remain in your seats with your seat belts fastened until we get this little issue taken care of."

Kate frowned as she looked back out the window and down towards the city. Kate was scared, but she was more concerned about how frightened Joanne must be.

In the back of the plane Joanne squeezed her eyes shut and prayed feverishly. *Please God, please don't let anything happen. I'm not ready to leave my family. They need me and I don't want to leave them. Please, please let everything be okay!*

Kate was saying her prayers, too, during the time that the plane circled.

Three long hours later the Captain spoke again. "Ladies and Gentlemen, this is the Pilot speaking. We are preparing to land but still seem to have a problem with our landing gear. To be cautious, please assume a crash position. Flight Attendants, please prepare for landing."

Joanne was scared to death. *Please, please don't let this be the end. Don't let me die this way. Don't let me die without saying goodbye to my kids. Don't let me die without saying goodbye to Roy!*

After only a couple of minutes, Kate felt the plane touch down and she heard the engines reverse. The front of the plane dropped jerking her forward. *The landing gear collapsed!* Then the plane dropped on Kate's side jolting her body towards the side of the plane where she hit her head. Everything after that was all a big blur. The plane was filled with loud noises of grinding metal as it scraped along the ground. She saw a flash from an explosion outside her window and then everything went black.

It was almost three hours of waiting for Roy and John before the door to their room was opened. It was Mr. Johnson. "Mr. Gage, Mr. DeSoto, would you come with me please?"

Roy and John sprung from their chairs and followed him down the hallway to the lounge where they had been before; the same room where the other families had gathered. John and Roy stood along side these other people, wondering what was going to happen next.

Three official-looking men entered the room. Instantly the room got eerily quiet—so quiet that you could have heard a pin drop.

One of the men started to speak. "Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for being patient this evening." He looked up at the sea of faces anxiously watching and listening to him. He continued, "We would like to inform you that Flight 103 has landed. At this time I do not have any details on each passenger." He looked up again at the nervous group and took a deep breath. "We do have some injured passengers. There is also one fatality that we know of." At that sentence some people started crying out loud while some others looked dazed and in shock. "The passengers are being taken to St. Francis, St. Andrews and Rampart General hospitals for treatment. We will have more of an update for you, shortly, as to who is being taken where."

Alarmed, John looked at Roy. "Roy, I can't just sit and wait here. Let's go check out the hospitals."

"I'm right behind you! Let's get out of here!"

John and Roy sped to the closest hospital first—St. Andrews.

They quickly entered the Emergency area and looked around. They could clearly see that passengers from the plane were being brought in. Thankfully, most of them didn't look badly injured.

John had an idea. "Roy, follow me." John and Roy approached the nurse's station. He took a moment to collect himself and calmly said, "Nurse, we're with the LA County Fire Department and we're looking for two passengers from the plane that crash-landed at LAX. We believe they may have been brought here."

The nurse looked at them suspiciously and asked, "What are their names please?"

"Joanne DeSoto and Kathryn Gage."

The nurse looked at Roy and John's nametags on their shirts – DeSoto and Gage. *Poor guys!* She scanned her list of patients and raised her eyebrows. "We do have a Joanne DeSoto here. But I'm sorry, there's nobody with the last name of Gage."

"She's here?" Roy asked, excitedly. "Is she okay? Can I see her? She's my wife."

"Please wait here a minute and let me check."

Roy let out a big breath. "She's here. She's here," he kept telling himself. He looked over at John's disappointed face. "I'm sorry, John. Don't worry, we'll find Kate."

"Yeah, I know," he said, soberly.

"Mr. DeSoto? You can see your wife. Other than a broken ankle she's doing just fine."

"Thank you! Thank you!" Roy said as he started to follow the nurse down the hallway.

"Roy?" John hollered.

Roy turned around. "Yeah?"

"That's great news about Joanne. I'm glad she's okay." He gestured towards the doors. "But, I'm going to head out to the other hospitals." John was glad for Roy. He really was. But he needed to find Katie.

Roy walked up to John. "John, I know you'll find her. They would have been sitting together, so if Joanne is okay, I'm sure Kate is, too. Why don't you come and ask Joanne about Kate. I'm sure she can tell you something."

"Yeah, that's a good idea. Thanks, Roy."

Roy put his arm around his partner's shoulders. "Sure."

They entered the room that Joanne and several other patients were crammed into. When Joanne saw her husband she exclaimed, "Roy! You're here! I was so scared!"

He sat on the bed beside her and gathered her into his arms. "Shhh, it's okay now. It's okay. God, I was scared, too. I'm so happy you're alright." He buried his face in her neck and tears slid down his cheeks.

After a few minutes Roy softly asked his wife, "Joanne, Johnny's trying to find Kate. Do you know what happened to her?"

Joanne looked over Roy's shoulder and saw John. "Johnny!"

John smiled. "Hi, Joanne. You really had us worried."

Joanne reached out her hand for John's and squeezed it. "Johnny, I just don't know what to tell you about Kate. The travel agent messed up and our seats weren't together. She was sitting up front and I was way in the back. Johnny, I never saw her after the crash. I'm so sorry." Joanne started to cry thinking about what might have happened to Kate.

This time it was John squeezing Joanne's hand. "Okay. Thanks, Joanne." John looked up at Roy. "Roy, I've got to get going. You know, to the other hospitals," his voice cracked with emotion.

"Good luck, John. I know you'll find her. She'll be alright. You'll see."

Roy and Joanne watched sadly as John left in search of his wife.

Joanne turned to Roy. "Roy, what if—? What if something happened to Kate?"

Roy took her in his arms again. "She'll be fine, Joanne. She'll be fine. Right now we have to concentrate on you."

John got back in his Rover and sped to the next hospital, St. Francis. He went up to the nurse's station and

did the same thing he had done at St. Andrews.

"I'm sorry, Sir. We have nobody here by the name of Gage." The nurse looked at him sympathetically, "I'm sorry."

"Yeah, me too." Dejected, he walked back out to the Rover, gripped the steering wheel and leaned his head against it. *Only one more hospital to go. If she's not there, then, heaven forbid—*.

John drove to Rampart General —the last hospital. Rampart was just as busy as the other Emergency rooms, if not more. He went to the nurse's station but nobody was there. He tried to find someone he could talk to but they were all in treatment rooms or running through the hallways to help the next patient. He started to panic and his stomach tightened when he realized that this was his last hope and he wasn't finding anyone to help him.

Finally, he saw a nurse at the nurse's station. John ran up to her and asked about Kate. The nurse looked at her list and told John what he dreaded hearing. "I'm sorry, there's no Kathryn Gage."

"Are you sure? How about a Kate Gage, or just anyone with the last name Gage. Would you check it again?" John was desperate.

The nurse looked over her list again and grabbed another list and looked at that, as well. She looked up at John. "I'm sorry, Sir. We don't have anyone registered here by that name."

John was in shock. He couldn't move. He couldn't think. *This can't be happening! There's got to be a mix-up. There has to be.* He didn't know what to do or where to go. He stood in that very spot for the longest time before his legs would move. He slowly walked towards the waiting room, sat down and dropped his head in his hands. Then he heard his name being called.

"Johnny? Johnny!"

John looked up to see Roy.

"What's the matter?" Roy asked, seeing the distraught look on John's face.

John opened his mouth to speak, but nothing would come out. He shook his head and dropped it again.

"Is it Kate?" Roy asked, sitting down next to John.

John nodded, his eyes welling with tears.

"Did you see her?"

John shook his head.

"Why not? She's here."

John looked up at Roy. "What— what do you mean?"

Roy explained. "I called Sylvia to tell her about Joanne. She said that Dixie's been trying to find you. She called my house to see if you were there." Roy continued, "John, Kate's here at Rampart."

"No, the nurse said she wasn't here." John was confused.

"Yes, she's here. We just need to find Dixie." Roy squeezed John's shoulder. "Come on."

John followed Roy down the corridor back to the nurse's station. "Excuse me, but can we speak to Nurse McCall?" Roy asked.

"I'm sorry, but she's very busy with a patient right now."

"Well, would you tell her that John Gage is here to see her? Just tell her that. Would you, please?"

"Yes, Sir."

Not more than a few minutes later Dixie came rushing down the hallway towards John and Roy. "John, we've been trying to get a hold of you! Kate's here!"

"Oh God, Dixie! I've been looking all over for her! They told me she wasn't here! Is she okay?"

"She will be, now that you're here. Come on, follow me," Dixie motioned to John.

Roy breathed a sigh of relief as he watched his partner come alive again now that he found his wife.

Dixie led John into the nurse's lounge where Kate was sitting and then left them alone.

John's heart skipped a beat when he saw her. "Katie!"

When Kate saw Johnny she leaped out of her chair and threw herself at him, wrapping her arms around his neck. "Johnny!"

Johnny embraced his wife, never wanting to let go of her again.

"Johnny, it was so horrible!" She started sobbing.

"I know, sweetie, I know. But you're okay. I've got you now," he whispered. The tears that he had been fighting all evening flowed freely down his face now.

Kate looked up at John with a frightened look in her eyes. "Johnny, I couldn't find Joanne! We weren't sitting together! I don't know what happened to her!"

John gently stroked her golden hair and reassured her. "It's okay, Katie. She's fine. She's at St. Andrews. She's got a broken ankle, but she'll be fine."

"Thank God! I was so scared!" She clutched at John's shirt and laid her head on his chest. "Hold me, Johnny. I need to feel your arms around me."

He wrapped his arms around her tightly again. "Katie, I was so afraid something had happened to you!" He then loosened his hold on her slightly. "Am I holding you too tightly? Are you hurt anywhere?"

"No, aside from a small bump on the head and inhaling some smoke, I'm okay."

"Are you sure? Let me look at you." He needed to see for himself that she was okay. She was covered in

soot. He gently tried wiping some of the soot and tears off her face. *Oh, Katie, what you must have gone through!* He tenderly kissed her forehead and lifted her chin so he could look into her beautiful blue eyes. "We heard that there were passengers who didn't make it through the landing, and then when I didn't find you at St. Francis or St. Andrews and when I was told you weren't here—," his voice broke.

Kate reached up and softly combed her fingers through his hair.

John reached up for her hand and pressed it against his lips. "Katie, I was so scared I'd lost you. I never want to have to go through that again." He pulled her to him again. After a few minutes, he quietly asked, "Katie, do you know what today is?"

"What?" she asked. She was still clinging to John. She finally felt safe now with John's arms wrapped tightly around her.

"We got engaged two years ago, today," John said as he kissed her temple. "Happy anniversary."

Katie smiled. *He remembered!* "I love you so much, Johnny."

"I love you, Katie. You have no idea how much I love you," he squeezed her even more tightly as the tears still rolled down his face. *You have no idea, whatsoever.*
