

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



Life's Trials

Kate fumbled with her keys trying to open the apartment door. Once inside she tossed the keys on the counter and set down the heavy bags of groceries she had carried up the steps to their apartment. After catching her breath she checked the answering machine, as usual. It was blinking; indicating there was a message. She pressed the Play button and started putting the groceries away.

"Hi John. This is Cathy. I was in town and just thought I'd call and see what you were up to. I'm staying with my old roommate. Give me a call, will you?"

Kate shook her head as she listened to the message; this was the second message this week from one of Johnny's old girlfriends.

"Hi, Katie. Are you there? Well...just checking to see if you're home yet. I guess you're not. I'll call you later."

That message made Kate smile. Her thoughts were interrupted when the phone rang.

"Hello?"

A voice on the other end replied softly. "Hi cutie! What are you up to?"

Kate smiled. "Hi. I just got home. I'm was just putting some groceries away and listening to your message. Are you having a busy shift?"

"No, it's been pretty quiet. How was your day?"

"Busy, as usual. John, you had a message on the answering machine when I got home. It sounded like it was one of your old girlfriends."

"Oh yeah? Who?" As soon as the words left his mouth he realized his stupid mistake. *Nice going, Gage.*

"Does it matter?" Kate pretended to be annoyed. Actually, she was a little annoyed that he would be interested in who had called.

"Nope. It doesn't matter a bit," he quickly replied and then changed the topic, hoping to bail himself out of that one. "So, what are you going to do tonight?"

"Not much. It was a busy day at work, so I'm just going to relax awhile and then go to bed."

"Kate, you've been tired a lot lately. You're not getting sick, are you?"

"No. It's just that there's been so much to do at work the last few weeks." Kate told a white lie; she had been tired a lot lately and she had been busy at work, but she'd been busy like this before. She just didn't want Johnny to worry.

"Are you going to eat something?"

"I hadn't thought about it. I'm really not very hungry, John."

"Kate, promise me you'll eat something. You haven't been eating much lately. Promise?"

"Yes, John. I promise I'll have something to eat." Katie gave in; she could never say no to Johnny.

"Okay. Well, I missed you today. Will I see you in the morning before you leave?"

Kate frowned. "I'm going to have to get up early for work, so we'll probably miss each other." She missed Johnny so much when he was working his shifts.

John was disappointed. "I wish we didn't have such different work schedules," he wished out loud.

"I know, me too," Kate sighed. "I miss you when you're not here."

"Me too."

"John?"

"Yeah?"

"It was Cathy." Kate felt she should tell him who had left him the message today.

"What?"

"The girl who left the message—her name was Cathy."

"Oh." John wasn't sure how to respond to that. It really didn't matter who it was that called—it's not like he cared anymore. He hadn't thought about any of his old girlfriends since he had met Katie. "Well, I'll let you get to bed. I'll see you later tomorrow. I love you," he said softly into the telephone.

"I love you, too."

John frowned as he hung up the phone. Sometimes he regretted that he and Kate had decided to move into his apartment after they got married. There were just too many girls stopping by or calling and leaving messages for him—old girlfriends that don't know he's married. *This makes the second phone call this week, and it's only Tuesday.*

"Hey, partner. What's wrong?"

John looked up to see Roy walk into the room. "Hey, Roy. I was just thinking that Kate and I should get a new phone number. There was another message on the answering machine today when Kate got home."

"Oh." Roy knew what John meant. "How'd Kate react?"

"She's cool about it, but it's got to be bugging her. If it were me and there were old boyfriends of Kate's calling all the time, I sure wouldn't like it."

"Yeah, you're right. That might be a good idea to get that changed. What else is going on at home with the newlyweds, or shouldn't I ask that?" Roy smiled as he poured a cup of coffee and offered it to John.

John took the cup from Roy. "Well, with our work schedules, not much, unfortunately. It seems like we saw each other more when we were dating."

"You know what you have to do, don't you?" Roy asked as he poured another cup for himself and leaned back against the counter.

"No, but I'll take advice from a guy that's been happily married as long as you have, if you've got some to give."

"Well, every week, Joanne and I make a 'date.' Once a week, we get a sitter for the kids and we go out for the evening—just the two of us," Roy explained.

"Hey, that's a great idea!" John exclaimed as he slapped his pal on the back. "Why couldn't I think of that? In a few weeks we'll start doing that," John said, matter-of-factly.

"Why in a few weeks? What are you waiting for?"

"Roy, man, she hardly eats and she tired all of the time. She just tells me she's overworked and that it'll all get better when this case is over that her boss is working on. She's hoping it'll wrap up in a few weeks." John shook his head. "I don't know if it's stress, Roy. Kate's been under stress before and it's never affected her this way."

"Oh." Roy pondered over what John just told him. Joanne hadn't said anything to him and she kept in regular contact with Kate. "Well, don't worry about it, I'm sure she'll be fine. Come on, isn't it your turn to cook dinner tonight?"

"Yeah," John groaned. "Thanks for reminding me," he said, sarcastically.

The next morning John wished again that he could have seen Kate before she left. The apartment seemed so empty when she wasn't around. When he was single there were times when he dreaded coming home—he got lonely sometimes. Now that he was married, he looked forward to coming home, especially if he knew Kate was there.

Around lunchtime the phone rang. The answering machine picked up the call before John could get to it. It was Cathy again.

"Hi, Johnny. It's Cathy. I thought I'd try calling you again. It looks like you're not home—"

"Oh, man," he muttered to himself. He didn't want to pick up, but after she started talking into the machine he changed his mind; he needed to tell her to stop calling him. "Hi, Cathy," Johnny said, with no expression in his voice.

"Hi Johnny! I'm so glad I got a hold of you. It's been so long since I've talked to you! How have you been? What have you been up to?"

"I've been fine. I'm married now," he said bluntly. There was no beating around the bush with Cathy.

"John Gage married? I don't believe it!"

"It's true. I appreciate the call though," he said in attempt to cut the conversation short.

"You don't have to hang up yet, do you?"

"Well, I was kind of busy—"

"Well, I won't keep you. But, guess what? Believe it or not, I've moved back to Los Angeles! I'm with my old roommate again. You remember Mary, don't you? Wild, huh? John, I was wondering if maybe we could get together sometime while I'm in town? I need to talk to you about something."

"I'm afraid not, Cathy. I'm *married*," he repeated. Sometimes Johnny could hardly get a word in edge-wise when talking with Cathy. And she was persistent—she usually got what she wanted.

"It's really important, John. I really need to talk to you about something. Can we meet somewhere? Please?"

John sighed. "Okay. Why don't you come by the station Monday." *I'd rather meet in a public place with my friends around than appear like I'm sneaking around behind Kate's back.*

"Okay, I'll be there. And you've broken a lot of hearts in Los Angeles, John. She's one lucky gal, whoever she is."

"Thanks, Cat."

"Well, I'll let you go. It was good to hear your voice again. I'll see you on Monday. Bye, John."

"Bye."

He was glad that conversation was over, but he couldn't help wondering what she wanted to talk to him about.

"John! I'm home," Kate called as she stepped into the apartment and dropped her keys onto the counter. It was almost four o'clock. *Man, something smells good.* She stepped into the kitchen and saw that John had put a chicken in the oven.

Johnny came out of the bedroom where he had been putting away clean laundry. "Hey, gorgeous! You sure do look sexy!" he said, as he wrapped his arms around her and pulled her to him.

Kate laughed. "Sexy is not exactly the look I was going for."

"How was your day?" he asked after he kissed her. Looking at her more closely, he could see dark circles under her eyes. "Katie, you look beat."

"I'm fine. I've just been busy." She put her arms around his waist and rested her head on his shoulder. "I wanted to get home early, especially when I knew that you would be home."

"Oh, yeah? Are you saying anything in particular, Mrs. Gage?"

"Do I have to spell it out for you?" she said, as she started to kiss his neck.

"Mmm, not anymore." He took her face in his hands and kissed her lips. "I missed you the last few days."

"Me, too," she replied. She reached a hand up to her shoulder and started to rub it.

"Are your shoulders sore?"

"Yeah, actually my whole back is," she replied.

"Let me put my magic hands to work," he said, grinning.

"You've got a deal!" Johnny gave *great* backrubs.

John grabbed her hand and led her into their bedroom.

Kate kicked off her heels, threw her jacket on the bed, untucked her blouse and laid facedown on the bed. John sat on the edge of the bed and gently massaged her back and shoulders. John felt her muscles start to relax almost instantly.

Kate closed her eyes and sighed. "Mmm, that feels so good. Don't stop."

After about 10 minutes John leaned down and kissed Kate's cheek. "How was that?" he whispered into her ear.

Kate turned over to look up at her husband. "That feels much better. Thank you." She softly brushed the hair off his forehead. "You are so good to me."

"Because I love you." He leaned down and kissed her again. When their lips parted Johnny lay down beside her, took her in his arms and held her.

"How did I get so lucky to get you?" she asked as she nuzzled closer to him.

"I'm the lucky one," he replied as he kissed her forehead.

She propped herself up on her elbows and looked down at John. "Johnny, I've got something to tell you," she said, with a devilish grin on her face.

"What's that?"

Katie leaned in towards John and started nibbling at his ear lobe.

Rubbing his hands over her back, Johnny closed his eyes and started to breathe heavily. "Katie, do you know what you do to me?"

"The same thing you do for me," she murmured into his ear.

Johnny caught her lips with his and kissed her long, hard and deep. He craved her so much—it had been over a week since they'd had any time like this together. He reached his hand around to the small of her back and rubbed it; knowing that it drove Kate crazy. "I've been fantasizing about you this way for the last two days, Katie," he said, in between kisses.

"Shhh, you're talking too much," she whispered, rolling over on her back, pulling him with her.

When Kate and John emerged from the bedroom they were still in each other's arms, hugging and kissing. They had been married almost nine months but they still couldn't get enough of each other.

While Johnny went to check on the laundry that he had almost forgotten about, Kate headed into the kitchen to check on supper. She saw the light blinking on the answering machine and played it.

"Hi, Johnny. It's Cathy. I thought I'd try calling you again. It looks like you're not home..."

"Hi, Cathy."

"Hi Johnny! I'm so glad I got a hold of you. It's been so long since I've talked to you! How have you—"

When John stepped back into the apartment Kate turned towards him and asked, innocently, "So, Cathy called again today?"

Johnny looked at her and didn't quite know what to say. He wondered how he knew, and then he saw the answering machine and realized he hadn't erased Cathy's message. "Yeah, but don't worry, I told her that I was happily married," Johnny reassured her as he walked over and kissed her.

John saw sadness in Katie's face. He took her chin in his hand and raised her face towards his. "I only have eyes for you, Katie. Do you understand that?"

Looking back up into John's eyes, Kate nodded again.

Now, let's eat, okay?"

Hesitantly, Kate said, "John, yesterday, I was looking for something in the drawer by the phone and I found your address book by mistake. Why haven't you crossed out your ex-girlfriends? I mean, I'm just wondering —"

He shrugged his shoulders. It just had never crossed his mind to get rid of it. It's not like he had used it since they started dating or that he planned on using it again. "Kate, you have nothing to worry about. You can throw out that book. I won't have a problem with that."

She took a deep breath and exhaled. "I know I'm being stupid. I guess I am a little jealous and maybe a little insecure. It's just that this whole thing with all these girls stopping by and calling is getting really old. I'm sorry."

"You're forgiven." John walked over to the drawer, pulled out his address book and tossed it into the garbage. Then he turned around back towards Kate and smiled, "There! Now let's eat. I'm starved!"

That evening, while they ate, John noticed that Kate was just playing with her food—pushing it around on her plate.

"Don't you like the chicken?"

Kate looked up at him, "I'm sorry. It's not that. I guess I'm just not very hungry. But thank you for making supper," she said, smiling. She looked back down at her plate of food.

John smiled. Kate still referred to 'dinner' as 'supper'; it was the Midwest in her. He continued to watch her—she wasn't looking well, at all.

"Kate, do you think that maybe you should go see a doctor?"

She looked back up at him. "It's just stress. That's all. Once we get done with this big case we're working on, it'll all get better. I promise." Kate, however, doubted more and more lately that it was stress causing her to feel this way.

John didn't pursue the conversation, but that didn't stop him from worrying about her. Changing the subject he told her, "Marco's having a party on Saturday and we're invited. Do you want to go?" He thought that having some fun with their friends might be good for Kate.

Kate put down her fork and grinned at John. "You know what? That sounds fun and I need a little fun after these few last weeks at work."

"So, it's a date?" John asked, smiling.

"It's a date!"

Everyone from the station was at Marco's party Saturday night—Roy and Joanne; Chet and his date; Hank and his wife; Mike and his wife, and a few others that John and Kate didn't know. It had been a long week for both John and Kate and they were glad for a chance to relax and have some fun with their friends.

All throughout the evening Kate and Johnny had been stealing glances at one another. They were secretly flirting with each other without anyone else noticing. Kate would stare at John over her drink, or comb her fingers through her hair as he was looking; John would touch Kate as he walked by, or he would wink at her if he caught her eye. It was as if they were dating, all over again.

Kate had been chatting with Joanne for quite awhile in one corner of the living room when Kate looked over at John. He was at the other end of the room with his back to her talking with Roy and Marco. It looked like Johnny was really putting the beers down. *He's lucky he has tomorrow off*, she thought, smiling to herself. As she watched John, he turned around and caught her eye. He grinned and winked at her and then turned back around to his buddies. Kate's stomach did a flip-flop. *God, that man is sexy!*

Kate and Joanne were still talking when John walked up behind Kate, put his arms around her waist and pulled her to him. "Hi, honey. You look beautiful, do you know that?" he said as he kissed her cheek.

Kate's stomach did another flip-flop as John touched her.

He looked up at Joanne. "Hi, Joanne." He was grinning from ear to ear. "Doesn't Kate look gorgeous?"

"Hi, John and yes, she does," Joanne said, chuckling. "Are you having fun?"

"You're darn right, I am! Marco throws great parties!"

"John, you're drunk! I guess I'll be the one driving home tonight!" Kate laughed.

"I'm not drunk, I'm just a little tipsy." Johnny flashed that crooked grin of his. "Joanne, would you mind if I stole my wife from you for a few minutes?"

"Be my guest," Joanne gestured, laughing. "I'd better see what Roy's up to and if he's having as good a time as you are—if you know what I mean!"

"What's going on with you? You're sure in a good mood!" Kate asked as John grabbed her hand and led her out of the room.

"Just follow me." He led Kate into the bathroom and shut the door. "I've wanted to do this all night," he whispered as he tenderly pulled her close and kissed her deeply. Her lips tasted so sweet.

"I wanted you to do that, too," Kate whispered back after their lips parted. "John, you continue to sweep me off my feet, did you know that?" She put her hand behind his neck and pulled him down to her for more.

"What do you say we go home and finish this, Katie?" Johnny murmured while kissing her neck. "Or, should we stay here? Have you ever wanted to do it in public?" he asked with a sly grin.

She smiled. "I hadn't really thought about it—I guess I'm kind of square that way."

"Did you know that all the guys have been looking at you tonight?" He was still working his lips up and down her neck and stroking her hair.

"They have not. You're just imagining it." Kate closed her eyes. *God, that feels good!*

John stopped kissing her to look at her. "No, I'm not. They really were. You're so pretty, Kate. You just don't realize how beautiful you really are." John thought Kate was *gorgeous*. He couldn't imagine why she couldn't comprehend just how pretty she really was. Men were always staring at her, but Kate never saw it.

"Keep that up and you might just get anything you want," she said softly. Johnny could always win her over. She couldn't believe she was actually going along with Johnny's wicked suggestion, but she was flattered by the attention, and it didn't hurt that he looked exceptionally handsome and sexy tonight.

They kissed passionately and when their lips parted they were practically breathless. Kate started softly kissing Johnny's neck as she ran her fingers through his thick, dark hair. She looked up at Johnny into his beautiful, brown eyes. "I love you, John," she whispered as she rested her hand on his cheek.

With his eyes half-cast he slowly leaned in towards her, gently kissed her, and then took her in his arms and held her tightly. He put his mouth against her ear and whispered, "I love you more. And I want to be with you now—so badly."

"Johnny, I do believe that you are corrupting me," she said as she unbuttoned John's shirt and dropped it on the floor. She ran her fingertips lightly up and down his back.

John started unbuttoning Kate's blouse and worked his way down her neck with his lips. He could hear Kate's breathing getting heavier, as was his. Hoarsely, he whispered, "Cat..."

Kate stopped and opened her eyes. "Who's Cat?"

"What?" Johnny asked, puzzled. Then his eyes grew wide as he realized what he had said. *Shit!*"

"I didn't say 'Cat,' I said 'Kate.'" He was trying to cover his tracks.

"Is that what you used to call Cathy? The girl that called you this week?"

Johnny saw the hurt and disappointment in Kate's face and he didn't know what to say.

"Well, I guess by the look on your face, it is. Thanks a lot, John. That's a real confidence booster for me. I guess we both know who's been on your mind," Kate said as she buttoned up her shirt. She opened the door and left the bathroom.

John stood there, dumfounded. He didn't even know where that came from. He had been bothered by Cathy's call earlier that week but he hadn't thought about Cathy tonight at all. *Why did I say 'Cat'? Why?* He blamed it on the alcohol. That had to be it.

"Kate, what's wrong?" asked Joanne when she saw Kate's face.

Kate bit her lip to keep from crying. "It's all of John's ex-girlfriends—*that's* what's wrong! They keep calling and stopping by the apartment, Joanne. I can only take so much, you know?"

Johnny quickly came out of the bathroom after Kate, tucking his shirt into his jeans. He walked up to Kate and spoke quietly. "Kate, I didn't mean anything by that. It just slipped out and I don't even know why. That's all there is to it. I promise."

Exhausted, Kate replied, "John, let's just go home. Why don't you give me the car keys? You're in no condition to drive." She knew the alcohol had a play in John's behavior; nevertheless, it did upset her to think that one of his old girlfriends might be on his mind.

Kate and John said their good-byes before leaving. During the ride home Johnny laid his arm across the back of the seat and gently played with her hair. "You are so beautiful, Katie, and I love you. I'm so, so sorry," he said, wistfully.

"I know, John. I know," Kate reassured him. But her feelings were still hurt.

When they got home Johnny waited until Kate was asleep before he crawled into bed beside her. He hoped that everything would be blown over by tomorrow.

To John's relief, Kate was a forgiving person and no mention of the previous night's incident came up the next day.

"Hey John. How's it going? Did you have fun on Saturday?" asked Chet sarcastically, as he strolled into the locker room Monday morning.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah. You weren't doing so bad yourself, either," Johnny retorted as he buttoned up his shirt.

"Yeah, but I didn't drag my wife into the bathroom for 'you-know-what!'"

"That's because you don't have a wife! Doubt you ever will. And she *is* my wife, for crying out loud!"

"Yeah, man. But it's like the old saying goes, 'Get a room!'"

"Just drop it!" Johnny slammed his locker shut and stormed out of the locker room and into the kitchen. John didn't need to be reminded of what he did Saturday night. And he wasn't looking forward to seeing Cathy today—she had only caused problems since she first called.

"What's eating him?" Chet asked Roy.

"I don't know," Roy shrugged.

It was around noon when Cathy showed up at the station. A few eyebrows were raised when Johnny let her in the door. Even though John hadn't dated her very long—they dated on and off for only a few months—everybody remembered her. She wasn't an easy one to forget—she was fabulous looking but talked incessantly.

"Hi, Cathy." John cleared his throat. "Um, you guys all remember Cathy?"

She was greeted with several hellos.

He was clearly uncomfortable with the situation. He didn't want the guys thinking that anything was going on between Cathy and him. He would never do anything like that to Kate. Clearing his throat he said, "Ah, why don't we go in the garage where we can talk." John led her into the bay.

"You look great, Johnny," she said softly, smiling.

John could tell she was flirting and he didn't like it. Scowling, he asked her, "What's up, Cathy? Why did you want to talk to me?"

"Boy, you really want to cut to the chase, huh?"

John nodded.

"Well, let's see, I'm not quite sure what to say. Well, I guess I'll just say it." She took a deep breath and blurted out, "Johnny, I had a baby!"

John's jaw dropped, he was completely speechless.

"Well, you don't have to look like that!" Cathy laughed. "It's a good thing! I have a beautiful little boy!"

John stammered, "Well, that's great. Congratulations!" He was happy for her. Maybe a baby *will* be good for her; maybe it will settle her down. He looked for a wedding ring on her hand, but he didn't see one.

"No, I'm not married," she said when she saw John's eyes drop down to her left hand.

"I'm sorry. I just figured—," he responded, slightly embarrassed.

"Do you want to see a picture of my boy?"

"Sure," he answered to be polite. He still didn't know why she came to see him.

She took a picture out of her purse and held it up to him. "This is him. Isn't he beautiful?"

"Sure, yeah. Yeah, he's really cute." John said, forcing a smile. "Ah, Cathy, so why is it that you wanted to see me?"

"To tell you about the baby."

"Oh. Well, I'm happy for you." He was puzzled.

Cathy looked at John. "I guess I'm not making myself clear. You see, John, he's yours."

John's heart just about stopped in his chest. He looked at her in total disbelief and his mind raced through all the times that they had dated. Yeah, they'd slept together a few times—but how could it come to this? "Are you sure?" was all he could say.

"Yes. Don't you think he looks just like you?" she asked, showing him the picture again.

He scrutinized the picture closer. The boy had dark hair and dark eyes. "I don't know, maybe. Are you positive, Cathy? I mean, it was only a couple of times!"

"I'm sorry to spring this on you this way, but I thought you should know. I thought you would *want* to know. I guess I didn't know any other way to tell you."

"Oh, man." John turned around and ran his hand over his face. *How could I have let this happen? We had always used protection and Cathy said she was on the pill.* He turned back around. "How? How did this happen? We were always so careful!"

"Not always, John. Remember that time after the party Mary and I gave when we moved into our new apartment?"

"Vaguely," John muttered. He didn't remember much of anything that night.

"Well, we didn't have any protection and—"

John held up his hand to stop her from talking. He didn't remember it and he really didn't want to hear about it. "Cathy, I need to think this through. I'll do right by you and the baby, I promise, but I've got to have time to think about this, to let it sink in."

"I understand, John. Do you want to call me when you're ready to talk some more?"

John nodded.

After Cathy left, John went into the locker room for some privacy. He was in complete shock. He sat down on the bench and dropped his head in his hands.

Roy had seen Cathy leave and had noticed that John hadn't come back into the kitchen. He went looking for John, knowing something was wrong.

"What's wrong?" Roy asked as he entered the locker room where John was sitting.

John shook his head from side to side and nervously ran his hand through his hair. "Roy, you're not going to believe this. Man, I screwed up big time! I can't *believe* it! I can't BELIEVE this happened!"

"What are you talking about?"

John got up and slammed his fist into his locker. "DAMN! Why was I so stupid? Stupid, stupid, STUPID!"

Roy's eyes widened and he stepped closer to his friend. "John, what happened? What did Cathy want?"

John turned towards Roy but found it hard to look him in the eyes. "Roy, Cathy had a kid. *My* kid."

Roy was speechless. Finally, he asked, "Is she sure it's yours? I mean, she was no angel, if you know what I mean."

"She says she's sure. Man, you know I love kids. I've always wanted kids of my own, but not this way. I didn't want them with Cathy. It's supposed to happen with *Kate*, not anybody else!"

Roy lowered his head and nodded. He looked back up at John and asked, "What are you going to do?"

"I have no idea. I mean, if he's mine, like she says he is, I have to help her and the baby out, financially. But I don't know what else I can do—or even if I *want* to do anything else."

Roy thought for a minute and had to ask, "John? What are you going to tell Kate?"

John's face turned pale. He sat back down on the bench and dropped his head again. *God, what am I going to tell her?* John swallowed hard, "Roy, I have no idea. What *am* I going to tell her?" He looked up at his friend anxiously for advice.

"Well, you know you that you've got to tell her. And the sooner you do it, the better. That's something you can't keep to yourself without it eating away at you. And she's going to find out sooner or later. Better it come from you than from someone else."

Roy was right. John knew that the 'someone else' meant Cathy.

Tuesday afternoon John anxiously waited for Kate to come home from work. When she walked in the door he was right there to grab her briefcase and take her jacket. "Hi sweetie," he said as he kissed her on the cheek. He then grabbed her and hugged her. "Why don't you go change and we'll eat. I made your favorite and I'm not taking no for an answer! We need to get some meat on your bones, Katie. You're getting so thin."

Kate was pleasantly surprised by this sudden attention. "Ah, okay. I'll be right back."

John waited nervously for Kate to come back out of the bedroom. When she did John walked over to the kitchen table and pulled out a chair for her.

What's he up to? "What did I do to deserve all this?" Kate asked, smiling.

"Nothing. I just love you and you work so hard. I wanted to do something nice for you for a change."

All through dinner John tried to keep the conversation upbeat. To Kate it almost appeared that he didn't want the meal to end.

Finally, Kate had to push herself from the table, even though she had hardly touched her food. "John, I'm stuffed. I can't eat another bite. But it was wonderful. Thank you." She had been watching John through out the meal and he seemed extremely uncomfortable the whole time. "John, what's wrong? Is something on your mind?"

He took a deep breath and exhaled. "There's something we have to talk about." He took Kate's hand and led her over to the living room couch where they sat down. John was facing her with his arm resting on the back of the couch. *How was he going to start? How was he going to tell his wife that he has a child with another woman?* "First, I just want to tell you that I love you. Just remember that, okay?" He looked at this woman he loved so much. He had been tormented all day thinking about how Kate would react to his news.

Kate laid her hand on John's leg. "John, you're scaring me. Is something wrong with you? Did something happen at work?"

He shook his head. "No, it's nothing like that." He looked into Kate's eyes, she looked so worried and it was killing him—he felt so guilty. John took Kate's hands in his, lowered his head and thought for a minute. Finally, he looked up at her and said, "Kate, I've got something to tell you. You're not going to like it, but you need to know about it. And try to remember that this happened a long time ago—before I met you."

Kate waited nervously. She was frightened at what kind of news Johnny might have for her.

"Katie, Cathy stopped by the station yesterday. You remember Cathy, don't you?" Johnny felt Kate stiffen right away so John held her hands even more tightly. Realizing the dumb question he had just asked, he continued, "Of course, you remember her. Sorry. Anyway, she said she had to see me—that she had something to tell me. Kate, I hadn't seen her since before you and I started dating. She had left Los Angeles for awhile, but she's moved back now." He paused and looked down at the floor.

"What else, John?" Kate barely whispered, almost afraid to ask.

John stood up, walked over to the window and stared outside. "Kate, she has a baby boy now." His voice broke.

Kate caught her breath, afraid of what was coming next. Cautiously, she asked him, "John? Is the baby yours?"

John continued staring out the window and nodded his head. "Yeah. She said it was mine." John was bracing himself for yelling or crying, or both, but he heard nothing. Nervously, he turned around to look at

Kate. She was just sitting there simply staring at the floor.

Kate was numb. Tears started to sting her eyes. She was definitely not prepared for this kind of news. She didn't know how to react, or what to think. Yes, she understood that it had happened before she and Johnny had met; however, her husband now has a child with another woman. And Kate would have to share Johnny with two other people that she didn't even know. Unless—*Oh God. Unless Johnny wants to do the right thing and marry Cathy.*

"Kate? What are you thinking?" John asked softly.

Still looking at the floor, Kate asked, "Do you want to marry her, John?"

He quickly went over to Kate, sat down next to her and stroked her hair. "Kate! No, I don't want to marry her. That's the last thing I want to do! Please don't worry about that. I am not interested in her, whatsoever."

Kate sighed with relief. Looking up at him, her eyes brimming with tears, she asked quietly, "What are you going to do?"

Tenderly, he replied, "I don't know. I mean, I have to help provide for the baby, but that's about all I know right now."

"So what happens now?"

"I'm not quite sure. See a lawyer, I guess."

"Have you met the boy?" She couldn't make herself say the words 'your son.'

"No, and I'm not sure when I will." John watched Kate carefully. All of the color had drained from her face, making her look more frail than she had been looking already lately.

"Katie, I am so sorry. If I could change all of this, I would. I'm so sorry," he dropped his head and tears slid down his cheeks. He was still holding Katie's hands.

She knew that John was truly sorry but she couldn't prevent herself from feeling resentful—not at John, but resentful that some other woman had given John his first child instead of her. Stroking John's hair she told him, "Johnny, it's going to be okay."

Her reaction surprised John. He looked back up into Kate's face. "I'm so sorry, Katie. You can't imagine the thoughts that went through my mind of what you might do when I told you. I was so worried. Can you ever forgive me?"

Wiping John's tears away she told him softly, "Yes, I forgive you, John. Like you said, it happened before we met. It'll be hard, but I can learn to live with it. I love you and I want to keep you; I'm not about to let another woman take you away from me, Johnny."

John brought Kate's hands to his lips. "That would never happen. I love you so much, Katie—you can't even imagine how much!"

Taking a deep breath, she told him, "John, you should call Cathy and arrange to meet the boy. I'm sure she's waiting to hear from you." She couldn't believe she was hearing these words emanating from her own mouth.

John was shocked at Kate's suggestion and shook his head. "No, I really don't want to. Not yet, anyway."

"John, you need to. You should call her," she insisted.

"Are you sure, Kate?" He looked deeply into her eyes, trying to figure out what was really going through her mind.

"You have to meet him eventually, John. You should arrange it as soon as possible—don't put it off. You should call her tonight." She hated what she was suggesting, and she hated this woman who had given John his first child. But she knew that John—, that *they* were going to have to deal with this sooner or later.

He dropped his head and exhaled. "Okay, I'll call her and arrange something for tomorrow since I'm off work." He really didn't want to do this, but Kate was right, it had to be done.

"I'm so sorry, Kate." He felt that he needed to keep telling her that. He felt awful that this had happened.

Her voice quivering she said quietly, "I'm going to bed, I'm exhausted." This news had drained away any energy that she had left; and besides, she didn't want to hang around when John made this call.

"Katie, are you okay? Please tell me." He knew she wasn't okay—she was so pale.

Kate looked at John sadly and nodded her head. "I'll be fine."

John watched Kate leave the room. He knew just how much he had hurt her. He would give anything to not have had this happen. He wished she would just scream and shout at him and call him horrible names, but she had done of that, which made him feel even worse.

That night, Katie cried herself to sleep while John called Cathy and arranged to meet her and her son—his son—at the park the next day.

John sat on the bench where he and Cathy had prearranged to meet and waited nervously. He got up several times and looked around for Cathy and her little boy. Shortly, he heard someone behind him.

"Hi, John. Sorry I'm late. Traffic was horrible!"

John stood up and turned around. His eyes gravitated to the little boy Cathy was carrying; a little brown-eyed, brown-haired boy. He looked to be a couple of years old.

Cathy saw John staring at her son. Smiling proudly, she said, "John, this your son, Joey. Well, his real name is Joseph, but I call him Joey."

John couldn't take his eyes off of the boy. *Does he look like me?* He couldn't really tell, for sure. "Hi Joey," he said as he took the little boy's hand in his. Looking back up at Cathy, he asked, "How old is he?"

"He'll be two and one half years old next month. His birthday is February 20th."

John nodded and motioned for Cathy to sit down.

"Cathy, how can I help you two out? I mean, what would you like me to do?"

"Well, I've given it a lot of thought. I'll need some financial support. That is, if you're able to do that."

John nodded. "I can help you with that."

"But what I want most, John, is for you to be part of his life. I mean, I want him to grow up knowing who is dad is. I want him to be loved by his father. I want him to spend time with you."

John nodded his head. That was only the right thing to do. "Yes, he deserves that."

"And I would like to have Joey spend time with his mother and father, together."

John looked at her in shock. "Cathy, I don't mind him knowing that I'm his father, but you and me spending time together? I can't do that. Really, I can't. I cannot have him growing up thinking that we are—, that we're—," he struggled for the words.

"That we're a couple?"

"Yes. I don't want him to think that."

"John. This is what I really want. And this is more important to me than the financial support. I really want this, John," she insisted.

"No, Cathy! I will not do that. You and I are not a couple! Damn!" He looked at the toddler, realizing that he would have to watch his language around him. "Cathy, we didn't even date all that much. And we certainly weren't in love," he said, angrily.

Tears sprang to her eyes. "Speak for yourself! I was in love with you and I *still* am! And look what that love brought us," she cried as she looked at Joey.

John clenched his jaw at what she said. He needed to set the record straight. Under his breath, he angrily replied, "Cathy, listen to me and listen good. As much as I hate to say this, this little boy, as precious as he is, was *not* a product of love. I do not love you. I never *did* love you. I'm married and I love my *wife*, not you. Now, I will help you financially. And the little boy—Joey—can know who I am. But I will *not* pretend that we were, or are, a couple or that we are in love. And that's all I have to say about that."

This infuriated Cathy. Glaring at John, she hissed, "I cannot *believe* you can be this way! He's your son! Look at him! Don't you think he deserves some happiness? Don't you think it would be best for him if he were to spend time together with his mother *and* his father? Don't be so selfish, Johnny. Think about Joey!"

"I'm not being selfish! It's for his own good. He's going to figure it out eventually and don't you think it'll hurt him more if he figures it out on his own—if he knew that we lied to him? I think you're way out of line asking me to do something like that!"

She started to shriek at John now. "You listen to me, John Gage! I will decide what's best for *my* baby. Not you! And if you don't like what I have to say, then you might just have to hear it from a lawyer. And I am *not* bluffing!"

John could not believe the way this conversation was turning. Trying to be calm he replied, "I don't think you should be yelling and acting like this in front of the boy, Cathy. You're really not being reasonable

about this. Just think about what you're asking. Please!"

Cathy stood there, staunchly. She was not going to budge an inch. Her mind was made up.

John threw his hands up in the air and shook his head. He said gruffly, "I've got to get out of here. Call me when you've come to your senses." Then he turned around and walked away leaving Cathy crying on the park bench, holding Joey.

During the drive home from work that night, Kate couldn't keep herself from crying. She had been given some news today that had upset her. When Kate pulled into the parking lot and shut off the car, she gripped the steering wheel, leaned her head against it and bawled her eyes out. *Why? Why did this have to happen now?* She cried until she there seemed to be no more tears left. She did her best to regain her composure before she went inside.

"Hi, Katie," John said softly, as she came through the door.

"Hi," Kate replied weakly, keeping her face turned away from John so that he wouldn't see that she had been crying.

"How was your day, Katie?" he asked as he walked over to her to take her coat. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing's wrong," she replied, her voice cracking.

John placed his hands on Kate's arms. "Katie, have you been crying?" he asked tenderly as he turned her around to face him.

Kate dropped her head into her hands and started sobbing all over again. She felt John's arms wrap around her, pulling her into him. She buried her face in his shoulder and sobbed her heart out.

"It's okay, Katie. Go ahead and cry," he said, stroking her hair as he held her tightly. It broke John's heart to see Kate this way. He was so angry with himself for allowing this whole situation with Cathy to happen.

"Just hold me, Johnny. Just hold me," Kate said through the sobs. She knew that John didn't know the real reason she was crying, but there was no way now that she could tell him.

John squeezed her even more tightly as the tears flowed from his eyes. "I'm so sorry, Katie. I love you," he whispered into her ear.

Later that evening John told Kate about his meeting with Cathy. Kate listened silently as John told of their encounter.

"And then she starts screaming at me saying that she's going to call a lawyer. I mean, she's out of her mind!" He looked anxiously at Kate who hadn't said anything yet, and he wondered why. "What do you think I should do?"

Kate had her own problems to think about right now, and this situation was making life miserable for her. "I don't know, John. I don't know. Why don't you ask Roy tomorrow and see what he thinks. I can ask my

boss if he thinks she has a case, but he doesn't handle divorce or custody cases."

"Would you, Kate? I mean, maybe he at least can recommend someone we could call—"

Just then Kate put her hand to her mouth, flew up for the couch, ran into the bathroom and slammed the door shut behind her.

John's eyes grew wide and he ran after her. "Kate!" He could hear her throwing up on the other side of the door. "Kate, are you okay?"

After a few minutes Kate opened the door and emerged from the bathroom holding a cold, wet washcloth up to her face. She was as white as a sheet.

John gently placed his hands on her shoulders and dropped his head so he could look her in the eye. "Kate, what's the matter? Please, will you go and see a doctor?" he pleaded. He was so worried about her. She had not looked good for weeks now; she was still losing weight and was constantly tired and he couldn't persuade her to see a doctor.

"I'm okay. Something I ate today just didn't agree with me, that's all. I'm fine. I feel better now."

"Are you sure that's all it is?" he asked, even though he didn't believe her.

"I'm fine," she insisted. Looking up at John and seeing the concern in his face, she told him, "John, I'm sorry. I know you want to talk about what happened today, but I am just so tired. I really need to get to bed. Do you mind?" She was genuinely sorry and she hoped he wouldn't mind, but she felt like death warmed over. And this crisis with Cathy was not helping matters—the whole subject drained her emotionally.

"No, Katie, I don't mind. It's okay. We'll just talk about it later." He kissed her forehead and gave her a gentle hug.

"Night, John," she said as she went into the bedroom.

"Night." John frowned and watched her with uneasiness as she closed the door. *Something definitely isn't right with her.*

Thursday morning, as John and Roy were dressing in the locker room, Johnny told Roy about what had happened in the park the day before.

"Roy, what do you think I should do? I mean, can she really force me to do this?"

"I don't know. It doesn't seem right to me. I mean, what judge would force a couple to pretend they were happy in front of a little boy when they're not even married?" Roy shook his head. "I don't think she can do that."

"Well, that's what I thought!"

"Have you told Kate yet?"

"Yeah, she knows." Puzzled, he asked Roy, "You mean Kate hasn't talked to Joanne?" John knew that

Kate confided in Joanne about many things, and Joanne usually shared them with Roy, unless Kate specifically asked her not to.

"No, Joanne hasn't talked to Kate since Marco's party."

John was really worried now. If Kate wasn't confiding in Joanne that meant that she's keeping it all inside and it's eating away at her.

"John, have you and Kate ever thought about just getting away for a few days? I think you two need some time alone together. You know, to kind of sort things out."

"I don't know, Roy. She still hasn't been feeling very good."

"Well, that's what I'm saying. It could be all the stress that's making her sick—with both of your schedules and now this thing with Cathy. My advice to you is to get away and forget about everything, at least for a couple of days."

John thought about it again. "Yeah—yeah! Hey, that's a good idea, Roy! We could go camping this weekend. I think she'd like that."

"How's this look for a place to stop?" John asked Kate as they approached a stream in the Rover.

"It looks perfect. You know, I don't think I'll ever get over how beautiful it is here," she said, as she stepped out of the vehicle and gazed at the scenery surrounding them. As far as the eye could see were mountains, grass, trees, water and sky.

"Great! I'll start setting up the tent." John was beaming now. He was anxious to be alone with Kate and to get away from all of their problems in Los Angeles.

"Let me help, John. I need to learn how to set up that blasted thing, too!" she laughed.

The tent was harder to set up than Kate thought. After it was set up, she went back to the Rover to grab the sleeping bags when all of a sudden she felt light-headed. She dropped the sleeping bags and bent over, leaning against the Rover.

"Kate!" Johnny ran over and knelt on the ground beside her. "Katie, are you okay?" he asked her with great concern in his voice. *She's so pale!*

"Yeah, I guess I just got a little dizzy. I'm fine now, though. Maybe I just need to eat something."

John thought that Kate still looked tired and he was worried even more now. He thought that getting away from the city was just what she needed, but he might just have been wrong.

Kate felt a better after they had eaten. When night fell, she and John sat around the campfire gazing at it, listening to the sound of the wood crackling. She was leaning back against Johnny and he had his arms wrapped around her. They sat quietly for a long time just staring at the fire while Kate aimlessly scratched at the dirt with a stick. Kate had totally forgotten about the whole situation with Cathy and was enjoying herself for the first time all week.

"Remember the first time we camped together, John?"

"I sure do. That was the first time we made love." He kissed her softly on the cheek and squeezed her.

"Uh huh. You remembered." She was glad that Johnny was as sentimental about things as she was.

"Should we go to bed?"

"Isn't it a little soon? It's not like we have to get up early tomorrow."

"I don't think you get it." Kate turned around and faced him with a slight smile. "Let's go to bed." She got up and extended her hand to him.

John took Kate's hand, stood up and pulled her into him. "I love you," he said as he wrapped his arms around her. "I've been so worried about you lately."

"I know you have been, but I'm okay, really. And I just want this whole week-end to be only about you and me, and nothing—or nobody—else."

"That's just what I had in mind." After John extinguished the campfire he put his arm around Kate's shoulder and guided her towards the tent.

"Kate? It's time to wake up, honey. I've got breakfast ready."

Kate groaned as she awakened. She was so tired. She would have loved to sleep some more, but then again, how often was it that she and John were able to get away together for a few days? "Okay. I'll be right out."

During breakfast Kate merely pushed the food around on her plate with her fork as John watched her.

Finally, he spoke up. "Katie, you've got to eat to keep up your strength."

"I feel much better today. I just needed a good night's sleep. I'm fine. Really, I am." She gave him a reassuring smile. But she really wasn't fine.

"Well, are you up for some hiking today?"

Oh, man. Hiking? I'm not sure I'm quite up to that, but how can I say no? Johnny loves to hike. Kate loved hiking, too—when she was feeling good. "Yeah, we can go hiking. That'd be fun," she said, forcing a smile. Maybe the fresh air and exercise will make me feel better.

They started their hike along the stream. They were walking on a gentle incline, but after only an hour Kate needed to stop and rest. She turned around to John who was behind her. "I need to stop for a few minutes, John." She lay down on the soft grass and closed her eyes. She felt John lay down beside her and drape his arm over her.

John propped his head on his hand and looked down at her with concern. "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine. I just need a few minutes rest."

They lay there quietly, listening to the birds and smelling the sweet scents of the grass and flowers. In a matter of minutes John heard Kate breathing steadily and saw that she had fallen asleep. *She's so tired!* He let her sleep while he relaxed in the grass himself. After about an hour he decided to wake her up.

"Katie? Wake up, Katie," John said softly.

Kate felt John's lips against her cheek. She opened her eyes and saw him staring down at her. "What?"

"You fell asleep. You've been sleeping for almost an hour."

"Johnny, you should have woke me!" Kate was surprised. *I fell asleep?*

"It's okay, Kate. You were so tired. Do you want to go back to camp?"

"No, I want to keep going. I feel good, now," she told him. She actually did feel a whole lot better.

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah, I'm positive. I feel a lot better," she reassured him. "Come on, let's keep going."

The day flew by and before they knew it, it was time to return to their camp. After they had eaten dinner John went into the tent and took out their sleeping bag, which was actually two sleeping bags zipped together.

"What are you up to?"

"Come here, Katie," John smiled and held out his hand to her as he crawled inside the sleeping bag.

Kate crawled in and lay beside John, resting her head on his chest. Kate closed her eyes and nuzzled her face into John's neck. She loved the way he smelled. After a few minutes Kate began to feel her stomach churn from her supper. She scrambled out of the sleeping bag, ran into the trees and got sick.

"Kate! God, Kate! What's wrong?" he yelled as he ran after her. He watched Kate as she stood crouched over with her hands propped on her knees. When she stood up, she was crying which scared John even more. "Katie, please, you've got to get to a doctor. You've been sick for so long," he pleaded as he gently rubbed her back.

Kate kept crying; she couldn't stop. She had been through so much these last days. She just couldn't bring herself to tell Johnny her news. It would be the last thing Johnny wanted or needed to hear—he was under so much stress already. *What lousy timing!*

John led Kate back to the campfire and he sat Katie on the sleeping bag. Then he ran for a wet rag and a glass of water. He held the wet cloth on her forehead while she drank the water.

"Do you feel better, honey?" he asked as he stroked her hair.

Kate nodded, still crying. "I'm—I'm so—sorry, Johnny," she said in between sobs.

"Katie, I'm going to take you back to town in the morning and you're going to see a doctor," John ordered.

Kate shook her head. "I've already seen one," she quietly replied, still crying.

"Why didn't you tell me?" Johnny was frightened now.

"I didn't want to upset you."

"What do you mean?" He took Kate's hands in his, squeezing them. "Kate, you're scaring me. What's wrong?"

Tears were streaming down Kate's face. When she spoke, John could barely hear her. "John, I'm pregnant."

Did I hear her right? "Katie, did you say that you're pregnant?"

Kate nodded, wiping the tears from her face.

Still holding her hands, Johnny smiled and said tenderly, "Katie, that's wonderful news. Why didn't you tell me before? I was so worried about you." He took her into his arms and gently held her.

Kate clung to Johnny. "It's not so wonderful," she said, her voice shaking.

John held her at arm's length so he could see her face. "Katie, what do you mean? This is *great* news! We're going to have a baby! Why are you so sad?"

Kate tried to choke back the tears so she could speak. "John, you're under so much stress already." Her voice broke. "You already have a child." As she said those words, her whole body started to shake. She dropped her head into her hands and started sobbing. "Why? Why did this have to happen?"

"Katie, listen to me, *please*. Katie, look at me." He gently took her chin in his hand and tilted her face up towards his. He stroked her hair softly and told her, "Katie, this is *wonderful* news. We're going to have a baby—*you and me*. This baby is even more special to me, Katie, because it's *our* baby. *You're* the one I want to have children with. I couldn't be happier."

"Really?" A relieved look came over Kate's face. "I didn't know how you were going to react with everything that's been going on."

"Kate, how long have you known this?"

"I suspected it a few weeks ago, but I found out for sure that day I came home a nervous wreck. You know, the day you met with Cathy."

"You've kept this to yourself? Sweetie, you know you can tell me anything. No matter how bad you think it might be. But this is *good* news, Katie. You're going to be a mommy!"

Kate smiled. "Yeah, I guess I am."

"Come here, you." Johnny and Kate crawled back inside the sleeping bags. John lay next to Kate and placed his hand on her stomach. "You have made me so happy, Katie. Nothing could have made me happier. You know, I never thought it was possible to love you more than I already did. But I do. I love you so much." He kissed her tenderly, at first, and then passionately. That night, Kate and Johnny made love under the moon and the stars.

"Hey Roy!" John exclaimed as he walked into the locker room at Station 51 Monday morning.

"Hey! You must've had a good weekend, huh? Did you and Kate go camping?"

"You bet. Thanks for the advice. That was the best thing we could've done. And have I got news for you!"

"Oh, yeah? What's the news?"

"Kate's pregnant. We're going to have a baby!" John said, beaming.

"Hey, that *is* great news!" Roy shook John's hand and slapped him on the back. "Congratulations!"

"Thanks! You know, I always knew Kate and I would have kids."

"Yeah? Well, you'll love being a dad. Let me tell you, it's hard work, but it's rewarding. I think you'll be great at it. And I think Kate will be a great mom."

"Thanks, Roy! Yeah, Kate is going to be a great mom. Now, I've got to go tell the rest of the guys. Man, they're not going to believe it!" John was ecstatic.

Just then Chet popped his head through the door. "Hey John, you've got a phone call. It's Cathy."

John lowered his head and put his hands on his hips. *Man, she sure knows how to spoil a moment.* "Okay, I'll be right there." He looked back up at Roy and said somberly, "Kate didn't want to tell me about the baby because of Cathy. She thought it would upset me. Can you imagine what she was going through, Roy? I mean, she knew for days that she was pregnant and couldn't bring herself to tell me!" He then angrily added, "Well let me tell you, Cathy is not going to get the best of me, you can count on that!" He stormed out of the locker room to take his phone call.

"Hello, Cathy," John said into the phone.

"Hi, John. I haven't heard from you and I just wanted to make sure you didn't forget about us," she said sarcastically. By 'us' she meant her and Joey.

"No, Cathy. I haven't forgotten. How about if I stop by Friday evening and we can talk?"

"Okay, John. Why don't you stop by around six o'clock. And John, I hope you've given a lot of thought to what we talked about."

"Yes, Cathy. I have. I'll see you on Friday."

When John hung up the phone he looked at Roy. "I just need to get this straightened out with Cathy. I've got to make her understand that I cannot agree to her terms."

"Yeah, well good luck," Roy said, unconvinced.

Tuesday night John crawled into bed with Kate, cuddled up to her and rested his hand on her stomach.

"What do you think we should call her?" he asked.

"Her? How do you know it's going to be a girl?" Kate grinned.

"I just know. And I know she's going to look just like her mommy. She's going to have blonde hair and big, blue eyes."

"It could be a boy, you know, with dark hair and dark eyes," she teased.

"True. Or, it could be a girl with blonde hair and brown eyes." John grinned.

"If it's a boy, I hope he looks just like you. Of course, you realize that all the girls are going to be chasing after him!"

"If it's a girl, she's not going to date until she's 30! I know all about guys. After all, I'm one!" he teased back.

"And I love you," she said as she moved down and nuzzled herself into his arms.

"I love you more," he said softly as he kissed her lips. "Katie?"

"Mmm?" she asked, snuggling up to John.

"Thank you."

"For what?"

"For giving me a baby."

Kate looked up at John. "Thank you for giving *me* a baby."

"I love you," John whispered as he pulled her closer to him.

John was off duty on Wednesday and had arranged to pick up Kate at work and take her to lunch. When he walked into her office he saw her sitting at her desk with her head resting in her hands. "Katie, are you feeling sick again?" He felt bad for her; she was having such a miserable first trimester.

"I don't know, John. Just a little while ago I started feeling a little sick. I just don't feel right." She didn't tell John that she had started cramping and spotting shortly before he had arrived. "I think we should cancel lunch and go see my doctor." She had an ominous feeling about what was happening with the baby.

John frowned. He knew that if something was going to go wrong in a pregnancy it usually happened in the first trimester. "Your doctor's at Rampart, right? That's only a few blocks away." John walked over to Kate and put his arm around her shoulder as she stood up.

Kate felt a twinge of pain in her abdomen, which made her stop in her tracks. "Ouch!"

"Are you okay?" he asked her, anxiously.

After catching her breath she nodded her head and continued walking.

With his arm still tightly around her, Johnny continued to watch Kate's face for any sign of pain. He noticed her wince a few times and he grew more and more concerned.

Once outside of the building Kate gasped, grabbed her abdomen and doubled over with pain.

"KATIE!"

"JOHNNY, IT HURTS!" Her face was contorted with pain.

Johnny immediately swept Kate into his arms and rushed her across the parking lot towards the Rover. He gently placed her in the passenger seat and ran around to the other side. He put the flashers on and sped out of the parking lot towards Rampart.

"Hang on, Katie. It's only a few minutes." John was scared to death. *Was Kate miscarrying? Please God, let Kate be all right. We can always have more kids, but let Katie be okay.*

Kate was bent over, clutching her stomach during the ride to Rampart. *God, it hurts!*

At Rampart, John pulled up to the Emergency doors, ran around to Kate's side of the vehicle, grabbed her and carried her inside. Almost immediately they met Dixie.

"John! What's wrong?"

"Dix, Kate's pregnant and she's cramping!"

"Take her into Room 2!" Dixie ordered. Then she looked down the hall and saw Dr. Brackett. "Kel! You're needed in Room 2!"

John rushed into Room 2 and carefully laid Kate down on the examination table.

Kate looked at John with tears in her eyes. "John, I'm so scared!"

"I'm right here, sweetie." He took her hand in his.

"Hi, John. Hi, Kate. What the problem here?" It was Dr. Brackett entering the exam room.

"Doc, Kate's about eight weeks pregnant and she started cramping."

Turning to Kate, Dr. Brackett said, "When did this all start, Kate?"

"I guess about a half hour ago." Hesitantly, she added, "I'm spotting, too." Kate looked at John. She didn't really know why she didn't tell him this before except that she was pretty certain she was miscarrying and she felt as if she were to blame.

"I see. Who's your ob-gyn, Kate?"

"Dr. Cook."

"Yes, I know her. She's an excellent doctor." Turning to Dix he said, "Dix? Would you order down Kate's

chart from Dr. Cook's office?"

"Right, Kel." Dix walked over to the phone on the wall and dialed.

Turning back to Kate, he said, "Okay, Kate. Just relax. I'm just going to feel your abdomen now. Let me know when it hurts."

Dr. Brackett started gently pressing different areas of Kate's abdomen until he came to a spot where Kate gasped and squeezed John's hand tightly.

Dr. Brackett frowned. "Kate, I'm going to need to do a pelvic examination. Do you want John to stay in the room with you?"

Kate nodded. "Johnny, stay with me, please?"

"Don't worry, I won't leave," he said as he brushed the hair off her forehead. He grabbed a stool, rolled it over by her and sat down. He took Kate's hand again.

"Kate, have you had an ultrasound yet?" Dr. Brackett asked.

Kate's body started to shake; she was starting to feel extremely cold. "No, my next doctor's appointment was next week." She was talking past tense now. She knew this pregnancy was in the process of ending, if it hadn't already ended.

Dr. Brackett smiled reassuringly at Kate. "Okay, Kate. Don't worry. We're going to take real good care of you."

Dr. Brackett walked over to where Dixie was standing. "Dix, we're going to need to do an ultrasound."

After the pelvic examination Dr. Brackett performed the ultrasound. John had not been trained in reading ultrasounds, so he didn't know what he was looking at. However, by looking at Dr. Brackett's face, he could tell it wasn't good.

"Doc, what is it?" John finally asked.

Dr. Brackett let out a deep breath and sympathetically looked at John and Kate. "Kate, I hate to tell you this, but you've miscarried."

Johnny dropped his head and exhaled. He ran his hand over his face and looked over at Kate who was lying there with her eyes closed. The tears were slowly sliding down her face.

Kate had already known what was happening, but hearing Dr. Brackett confirm it was what triggered the tears.

John dropped his head again as the tears started streaming out of his own eyes. He had wanted a child with Kate so badly.

Kate could see that this had devastated John and it ripped her heart apart. She slipped her hand out of John's grip and caressed his face. She had lost her baby—*his* baby. "I'm so sorry, Johnny," she whispered. She would never forgive herself for letting John down this way.

He took her hand and pressed it up against his lips. "It's okay, Katie. You're all right, and that's what really matters. We can have more babies." He looked up at Dr. Brackett and asked, "She *is* okay, isn't she Doc?"

Dr. Brackett nodded. "She will be."

"And we can try again?"

"I don't see why not. But I want Kate to see Dr. Cook right away."

John sighed with relief. He leaned in towards her and kissed her forehead. "I love you, Katie."

John was sitting next to Kate's bed when she woke up a few hours later. She had been exhausted and Dr. Brackett wanted to keep her overnight in the hospital. They had given her a mild sedative so that she could rest.

Johnny saw Kate stir and open her eyes. "Hi, Katie." He stroked her hair as he waited for her to come out of the sedation.

Kate groaned. She was trying to wake up but she was so groggy. "Hi," she finally whispered.

John smiled. "You know, we have to stop this bad habit of landing in the hospital."

Kate looked at this wonderful man that she was madly in love with. She felt so awful, so guilty. "I'm sorry, John."

"Shhh, Katie," he said, trying to soothe her. "There's nothing to be sorry for. You couldn't help this. It just wasn't meant to be. Just rest." He continued to softly stroke her hair as she fell back asleep. As he watched her sleep he thanked the Lord that she was okay. He had wanted a child with Katie so badly, but she was okay, and they could try again.

On Friday evening John showed up at Cathy's apartment. Mary answered the door. "Well, it's Johnny Gage! How long has it been since I've seen you? It's got to be a couple of years, at least!"

"Hi, Mary." John smiled. He liked Mary; she was the complete opposite of Cathy.

"How have you been? I heard you got married!"

John smiled. "Yeah. Yeah, I did. What about you? Are you and Troy still dating?"

"We're engaged. We're getting married in a couple of months!"

"Hey, that's great! Congratulations! You'll love married life. I highly recommend it."

"Boy, that's really something to hear that coming from a man! Your wife must be great, John."

"She is." John beamed. Looking around, he asked, "Uh, Mary, where's Cathy?"

"Oh, she's not home yet. She won't be home for another hour."

"Oh." *Am I early?* John looked at his watch. *No, it's six o'clock, the time they agreed upon.*

"I have to leave in about a half hour, but you're welcome to stay here and wait for her."

"Okay. Thanks, Mary."

"So, I suppose you heard about Cathy and David?"

Absent-mindedly Johnny said, "Cathy and David? No, I haven't heard anything."

"Cathy told you she has a little boy, didn't she?"

"Well—yeah. That's why I'm here."

"What do you mean?" Mary was confused.

"Joey—the little boy—he's mine. I thought you knew that."

Mary's jaw dropped. She couldn't believe what she just heard, but she quickly figured out what was going on. "John, I hate to break this to you, but Joey is *not* your little boy. Joey is David's son."

John was shocked. "What? What do you mean? Why would she tell me he was mine?"

"Because she's never gotten over you, that's why. She's always been hung up on you, John. Joey is David's boy, but she hasn't even told David yet. I thought she would eventually tell him, but apparently she's had other plans. Man, it doesn't surprise me, though." Mary shook her head. "She would do just about anything to get you back, John."

John's face turned red with rage and he clenched his jaw.

"I'm sorry, John." Mary shook her head at what Cathy had done.

"No, don't be sorry. You just did me a huge favor. Thanks, Mary. Take care," he said as he left.

John drove directly home. When he entered the apartment he saw Kate standing by the window, looking out. "Hi, Katie."

She turned around to face him; the look on her face was a look of complete and total sadness.

Then John noticed someone else in the room. There, on the couch, sat Cathy.

"John, Cathy came to see you."

John stepped into the apartment and closed the door behind him. "What are you doing here, Cathy?" he hissed.

"I haven't heard from you in awhile, John. I just wanted to be sure you hadn't forgotten about us, about *your*

son."

He didn't like the way she had said that. "I've had other things going on," he said through his clenched jaw. He looked over at Kate who had turned back around towards the window.

"John, what else could be more important than your son?" Cathy asked, sarcastically.

Kate couldn't stay in the room any longer. There was no way she'd be able to listen to this and still hold herself together after losing their baby. She turned around and walked through the living room towards the bedroom. "I'll be in the bedroom so you two can talk alone."

"Kate, wait." John gently grabbed Kate's arm.

"Johnny, please don't make me stay," she whispered to him, her eyes welling up with tears. The emotional pain of her miscarriage was still fresh in her mind. It would be something she would never forget.

He placed his hands on her shoulders and bent his head down to look her in the eye. "Kate, you need to hear this. Trust me," he replied, softly.

Stepping past Kate he looked at Cathy who he could see was growing impatient.

"Johnny, why didn't you call?"

John ignored her question. "Cathy, you were late," he said, grimly.

"What do you mean?" Cathy was confused.

"We were supposed to meet at your apartment half an hour ago. Remember?"

Puzzled, Cathy replied, "No, we were supposed to meet last night. And you didn't show up. So, I was waiting for you to call to explain why."

"No, it was tonight," he insisted. "And when I stopped by your apartment, and you weren't there, I had a nice conversation with Mary."

Cathy's face turned pale. "Oh, really?" she asked cautiously.

"Really. And I learned some very interesting information."

"And what's Mary been telling you these days?" she asked, defensively.

"Cathy, you and I both know what's going on here. Mary told me all about it."

Kate was confused. *What's going on?*

"Told you all about what?" She hoped he was bluffing.

"She told me that Joey is David's son, not mine," he said, calling her bluff.

"She's lying!" Cathy shouted.

"Well, there's one way to find out, isn't there? We'll just go down to the hospital and take a blood test. I've got a rare blood type, Cathy, and it'll be easy to know if Joey is really mine or not." This time he *was* bluffing.

Cathy stood there in shock looking at John. "You can go to hell, John Gage! GO TO HELL!" She stormed past him towards Kate. "And you, you little bitch! You think you're pretty smart, don't you?" She shoved Kate hard, causing her to lose her balance and fall.

John rushed over to Kate and helped her up off the floor. "Kate, are you okay?"

"I'm fine," she whispered, trembling.

Enraged, John turned to Cathy and pointed to the door. "Get out! Get out of here NOW! And don't ever show your face to me or to my wife again! GO ON! GET OUT!"

"You can BOTH go to hell!" Cathy screamed as she went through the door and slammed it hard behind her.

John turned back to Kate and placed his hands on her arms. "Katie, are you sure you're okay?"

Kate didn't answer him; she was completely stunned by what had just happened.

Johnny asked again, this time more anxiously. "Katie, honey? Did she hurt you?"

Kate shook her head and looked up into his eyes. "Her son—he isn't yours?"

He looked back at his wife's tear-filled eyes. "No, he's not. She was lying the whole time. God, Kate, I'm so sorry!" he said as he gathered her into his arms and rocked her. Tears streamed down his face as he recalled what they had both gone through two days ago.

She buried her face in his chest and cried. She was crying tears of sorrow mixed with tears of relief.

Johnny held her until she had finished crying. She stepped back from John and wiped her eyes with her hands. Kate laughed. "I don't know if I'm happy or sad."

"What do you mean?" John asked her, surprised.

"I mean, I know you want children and we lost ours," she said, her voice cracking. Regaining her composure she continued, "but I'm glad you don't have a child with someone else."

John smiled. He pulled her close again and rested his cheek against hers. "I know. I feel the same way. I only want babies with you, Katie."

"I wanted to give you that so much."

"I know. And I wanted it too. But the time wasn't right, I guess. It'll happen when it's supposed to happen," he tried to reassure her, even though he was still grieving too. "We just need to give it time. Just give it time, Katie."

"Hi, guys," Kate greeted the guys as she walked into Station 51 that evening.

A chorus of hello's greeted her.

"You guys like chocolate chip cookies?" she asked, as she placed a container on the table.

It wasn't long before all of the guys were gathering around the table, smiling.

"Are you guys having a slow Friday night?" she asked the Captain.

"It's been slow so far, knock on wood," he answered, as he knocked on the table.

"Hey, Kate. Thanks for the cookies!"

"You're welcome, Marco." Kate laughed.

"Hey, Kate. How have you been feeling?" asked Chet.

The other guys stopped eating and scowled at Chet.

He realized the guys were staring at him. "Sorry, Kate," Chet apologized. "I didn't mean to—"

"That's okay. I'm feeling much better. Thanks for asking." She smiled at them. "It's okay, really." She gestured towards the cookies, "Dig in, guys!" She looked around for John and didn't see him. "Roy, where's John?"

"He's in the bay working on the squad." Roy was glad to see Kate in a good mood. He stepped away from the crowd of men to talk to her in private. "It's good to see you. You know, I haven't seen you much, lately."

"I know, I'm sorry. Things are getting better though. Your wife's been a real help." Whispering, she said, "Roy, I didn't know that you two went through a miscarriage. I had no idea until I had mine."

Roy frowned. "I guess it's not something you really want to think about a whole lot. You never really get over it, I guess."

Kate nodded.

"Well, I'd better grab some of those cookies before there aren't any left. Go on, Johnny will be glad to see you."

Kate smiled at him. "Thanks Roy."

Kate walked out of the kitchen into the bay. John was sitting on the bumper of the squad polishing tools. He didn't hear her come up behind him.

"Hi handsome," she said.

He stood up and turned around. His face broke into a big grin. "Hey! What are you doing here?" God, it was so good to see her.

"I just thought I'd stop by." She smiled and gestured back towards the kitchen. "I brought some cookies. I don't think there's going to be any left for you, though, the way they're going at them."

"Oh yeah?" He walked up to her, put his arms around her and gave her a big squeeze. "Mmm, you feel so good." He started to let go but he felt Kate still clinging to him, so he held on to her. He closed his eyes and buried his face in her neck. "You smell good, too," he whispered.

"I got lonely for you tonight." She tilted her head back and looked up at him. "I wanted to see you."

"I missed you, too. I guess that's why I'm out here all by my lonesome while the guys are in there," he said. "I think Roy could tell that I wanted to be by myself."

Kate stood on her toes to reach Johnny's lips with hers. She kissed him intensely and John eagerly responded. They hadn't kissed like this in a long time—since before the miscarriage almost three weeks ago now.

When Kate stepped back John immediately grabbed her and pulled her back to him for more. He ached for her so badly. They kissed passionately until they both had to finally come up for air. "I've missed you," he whispered into her ear.

"I've missed you too. John, I want to be with you so much it hurts," she told him, looking up into his deep eyes, running her fingers through his hair.

He leaned his forehead against hers. "Same here," he said quietly. They had both been through so much this last month and it seemed like things might be getting back to normal—finally. "What do you say we go out on a date tomorrow?"

"A date?" she asked, slyly, as she played with the button on his shirt. "Hmm, and what do you propose we do on this date?"

"I think we can think of something, Mrs. Gage," he said as he squeezed her body against his.

"Oh, really? Like what?" she asked innocently.

"Quit playing games," he said, smiling.

"Games? Who's playing games?" she teased. "Is this what you want to do?" She put her arms around his neck and started nibbling on his ear. "Or maybe, this?" And she started kissing his ear, breathing heavily into it.

"I think you've got the right idea," he said, closing his eyes and rubbing his hands over her back. He wished he were at home with Katie right now instead of at work. "Damn! The things you do to me, Katie. I'll teach you a lesson," he said as he lifted her shirt and rubbed the small of her back while kissing her neck, making her whimper.

"Do you want me to get the rest of the night off?" he asked her, his voice hoarse.

"Oh, God yes," she breathed. Coming to her senses, she changed her mind. "No, you can't. They'll know what's up," she said, turning red.

"Are you embarrassed, Katie? Remember that these are *guys*. They know what it's like!" he grinned,

amused by her reaction.

Smiling sheepishly, she replied, "I know, but I can wait until tomorrow, if you can. It'll be hard, though. Besides, I don't want to get on the Captain's bad side—what with me coming down to the station unexpectedly and then taking you home."

"Well, we'll just have to wait until tomorrow. I'm going to take you out for dinner and dancing and then back to 'my place.'" He grinned, devilishly.

"You're a bad boy and I like bad boys," she smiled, flirting. God, she loved this man. She reached up and brushed the hair off his forehead. She stared into his eyes, intently.

"What are you thinking about?" he asked.

"How badly I want babies with you," she said, wistfully.

He caressed her cheek. "I know, Katie. Me too." Then he flashed her that crooked grin of his.

"What are you smiling about?" she asked, giggling.

"I was just thinking of all the fun we'll have trying to make babies," he smiled, as he leaned in to kiss her again.
