

*For every marriage
that takes an
unexpected turn*

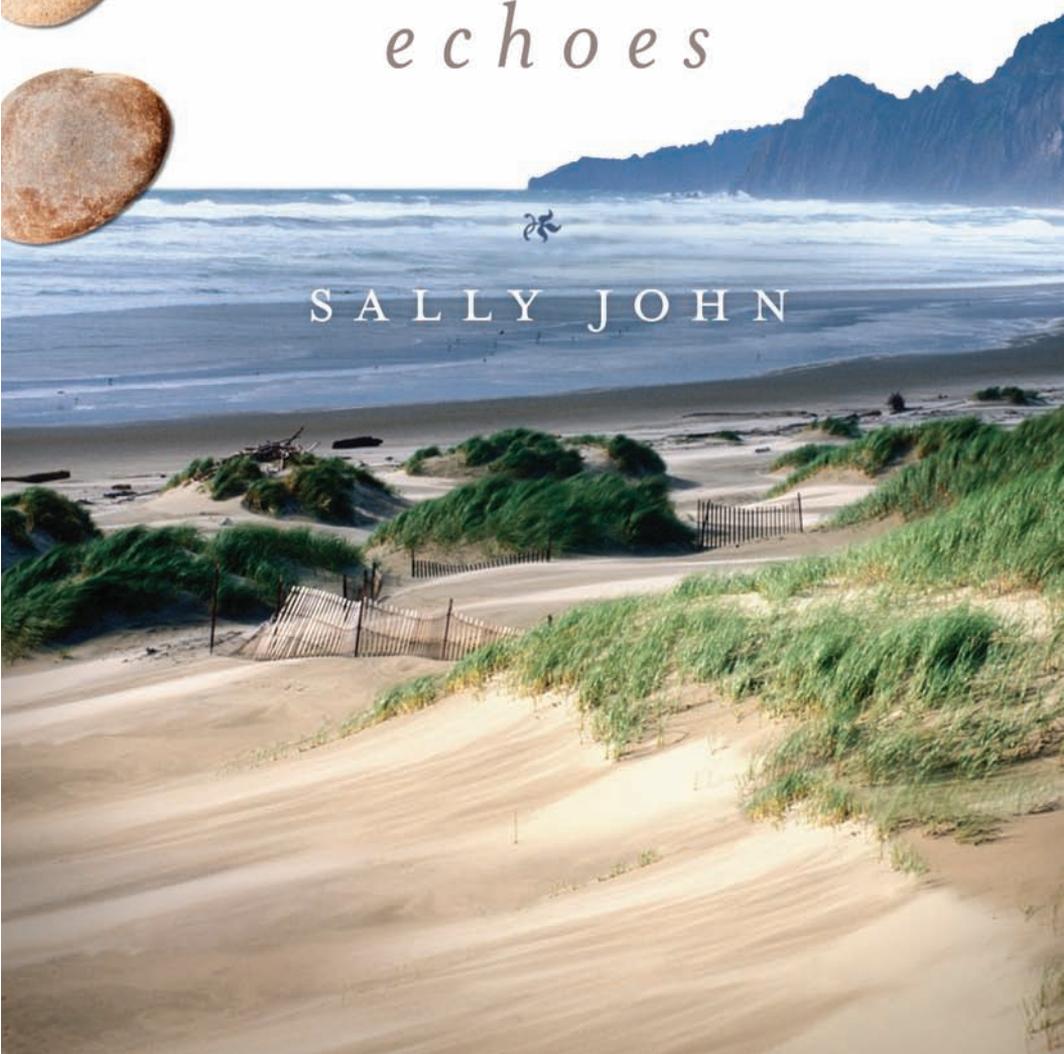


HEART

echoes



SALLY JOHN



Praise for the Side Roads series

“A thoughtful and engaging novel.”

PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

“John has penned an exciting, faith-based story.”

BOOKLIST

“This inspirational [story] reminds readers that it’s never too late for second chances. And when our hope is in God, nothing is impossible.”

ROMANTIC TIMES

“Sally John has penned another moving tale. *Ransomed Dreams* asks hard questions about faith and forgiveness . . . but it also offers hope. It’s worth reading to discover the answer.”

CROSSWALK.COM

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“*Ransomed Dreams* is another wonderful weave of compelling characters, poignant pacing, and the twin truths that forgiveness is costly but love can meet the expense head-on. Sally John is an insightful, inspiring storyteller.”

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TITLETRAKK.COM

“A fascinating novel exploring the desert times in life and marriage.”

ROMANTIC TIMES

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“John’s keen insight into the complexities of marriage and personal identity make *Desert Gift* one of her finest works.”

CROSSWALK.COM



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e c h o e s



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Heart Echoes

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*For my sister
Cindi Cox
and my sisters-in-law
Sandy Carlson, Patti John, and Patty John*

He heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds.

PSALM 147:3

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CHAPTER I



LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

At precisely twelve minutes and thirty-five seconds past ten o'clock in the morning, Pacific Daylight Time, Teal Morgan-Adams's world ceased to exist.

She knew the exact time because the NPR radio announcer Dave Somebody said it after his traffic update, which started with, "Slow going westbound on the 10, folks."

Teal snorted. "'Slow going.' Ha. It's a regular parking lot out here, Dave."

She sat in the thick of it, second lane from the right, windows shut, air on high against the August heat, comfy in her white leather seat. She read e-mails on her smartphone and, in her imagination, dared a CHP officer to zoom up on his motorcycle and ticket her.

"As if moving four miles per hour on the freeway could technically be referred to as driving and thereby breaking the law."

She laughed out loud. If her husband were there, he'd roll his eyes and question once again his sanity for marrying a lawyer. River swore

Teal's favorite pastime was looking for a fight. After three and a half years, though, his rolling eyes still sparkled whenever he said it.

The radio announcer wrapped up his report. "The time is now twelve minutes and thirty-five seconds past ten o'clock."

And then the shaking began.

As always, the unexpected movement registered about half a point on Teal's scale of awareness. One eye on her phone, one eye on the Iowa license plate on the minivan in front of her, she inched forward and braked. Her body trembled, as if she were on a train.

"What . . . ?"

And then her coffee mug jiggled and rattled in its holder. Static hissed from the radio.

"Nooo." The mug bounced onto the floor. *Yes.*

"Oh, God!" It was all the prayer she could form at the moment.

Adrenaline surged through her. What to do? What to do?

Duck, cover, and hold on to a sturdy piece of furniture.

In the car? She was in the car!

Teal dropped the phone to her lap, shifted into Park, and grasped the steering wheel tightly with both hands. It shook. Her body quivered. The car vibrated. Her seat belt constricted. The glove box popped open. The world rumbled, a hurtling train on rickety tracks to nowhere.

Her pulse throbbed in her throat. Her thoughts raced in circles. What to do? What to do?

If you are driving, stop. Okay. Okay. Move out of traffic.

Out of traffic? Not a chance.

She caught sight of the driver to her right. He clutched his steering wheel, his sunglasses askew, his face scrunched up. Waiting. Holding his breath.

Teal had learned to deal with earthquakes. She and her daughter had lived in Southern California for fifteen years. Tremors came. Teal panicked. Maiya grinned. Tremors went. She walked off the adrenaline rush. Maiya laughed. They talked about what they should have done. Life got back to normal.

These tremors should have *went* by now.

People should be exhaling by now.

She should be out of the car by now, *whewing* with those Iowa tourists in front of her, exchanging nervous chuckles, talking about Disneyland.

Do not get out of the car.

Do not stop under an overpass.

“Oh, God! Oh, God! Oh, God!”

She stared at the overpass. According to the huge green sign to her right, the next exits at the overpass lay a quarter of a mile ahead. Hers was one of them.

Cars and vans and pickups and semis and SUVs and RVs moved where there was no space for movement. Drivers jockeyed to get out from under the bridge. Horns blared. Metal crunched against metal.

And then the tremors went. The shaking stopped. It was over.

Or not.

In horror Teal watched the chain reactions of vehicles slamming and shoving and sliding into each other not far ahead of her. Straight lanes of traffic were now a massive logjam of cars facing every direction.

And then the unthinkable.

The overpass shifted. It happened in agonizingly slow motion.

The right-side concrete abutment twisted, a giant robot turning, losing his footing, falling, falling, falling. It splayed out over the freeway below. The bridge it had been holding aloft toppled across five lanes of logjam.

The air exploded with shrapnel. Crashing noises reverberated.

Teal burst into tears, released the seat belt, turned off the engine, and ducked. She squeezed herself under the dashboard, covered her head with her arms, and began shaking all over again.

The first aftershock hadn't even hit yet.

About the Author

WHEN THE GOING gets tough—or weird or wonderful—the daydreamer gets going on a new story. Sally John has been tweaking life's moments into fiction since she read her first Trixie Belden mystery as a child.

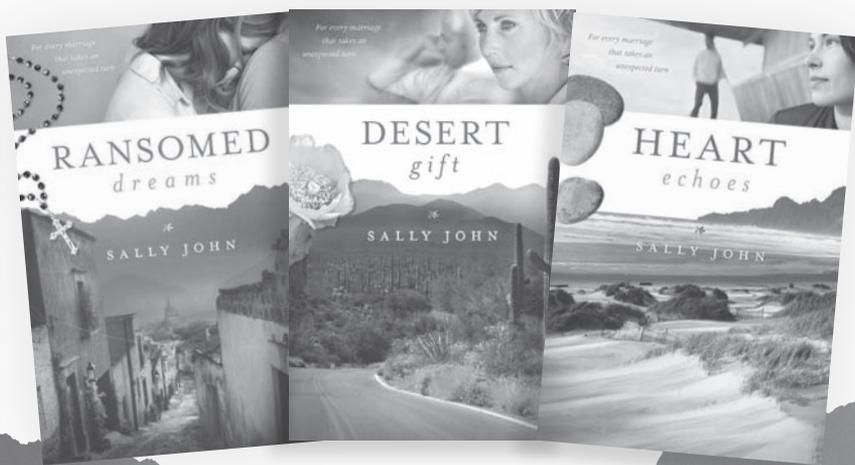
Now an author of more than fifteen novels, Sally writes stories that reflect contemporary life. Her passion is to create a family, turn their world inside out, and then portray how their relationships change with each other and with God. Her goal is to offer hope to readers in their own relational and faith journeys.

Sally grew up in Moline, Illinois, graduated from Illinois State University, married Tim in 1973, and taught in middle schools. She is a mother, mother-in-law, and grandmother. A three-time finalist for the Christy Award, she also teaches writing workshops. Her books include the Safe Harbor series (coauthored with Gary Smalley), The Other Way Home series, The Beach House series, and the In a Heartbeat series. Many of her stories are set in her favorite places of San Diego, Chicago, and small-town Illinois.

She and her husband currently live in Southern California. Visit her website at www.sally-john.com.

*Don't miss these inspiring stories
of unexpected detours & second chances.*

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SIDE ROADS
series



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