



The Johnstown Girls

Kathleen George

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Ellen Emerson may be the last living survivor of the Johnstown flood. She was only four years old on May 31, 1889, when twenty million tons of water decimated her hometown of Johnstown, Pennsylvania.

Thousands perished in what was the worst natural disaster in U.S. history at the time. As we witness in *The Johnstown Girls*, the flood not only changed the course of history, but also the individual lives of those who survived it.

A century later, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reporters Ben Bragdon and Nina Collins set out to interview 103-year-old Ellen for Ben's feature article on the flood. When asked the secret to her longevity, Ellen simply attributes it to "restlessness." As we see, that restlessness is fueled by Ellen's innate belief that her twin sister Mary, who went missing in the flood, is somehow still alive. Her story intrigues Ben, but it haunts Nina, who is determined to help Ellen find her missing half.

Novelist Kathleen George masterfully blends a history of the Johnstown flood into her heartrending tale of twin sisters who have never known the truth about that fateful day in 1889—a day that would send their lives hurtling down different paths. *The Johnstown Girls* is a remarkable story of perseverance, hard work, and never giving up hope in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds. It's also a tribute to the determination and indomitable spirit of the people of Johnstown through one hundred years, three generations, and three different floods.

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