



## Bridge to Haven

*Francine Rivers*

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## **Bridge to Haven** Francine Rivers

To those who matter in 1950s Hollywood, Lena Scott is the hottest rising star to hit the silver screen since Marilyn Monroe. Few know her real name is Abra. Even fewer know the price she's paid to finally feel like she's somebody.

To Pastor Ezekiel Freeman, Abra will always be the little girl who stole his heart the night he found her, a wailing newborn abandoned under a bridge on the outskirts of Haven. Zeke and his son, Joshua—Abra's closest friend—watch her grow into an exotic beauty. But Zeke knows the circumstances surrounding her birth have etched scars deep in her heart, scars that leave her vulnerable to a fast-talking charmer who lures her to Tinseltown. Hollywood feels like a million miles from Haven, and naive Abra quickly learns what's expected of an ambitious girl with stars in her eyes. But fame comes at a devastating price. She has burned every bridge to get exactly what she thought she wanted. Now all she wants is a way back home.

In this riveting and highly anticipated tale of temptation, grace, and unconditional love, *New York Times* bestselling author Francine Rivers delivers big-canvas storytelling at its very best.

## **Bridge to Haven Details**

Date : Published April 22nd 2014 by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

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Author : Francine Rivers

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# From Reader Review Bridge to Haven for online ebook

## Marnie Krüger says

**You can make many plans, but the Lord's purpose will prevail.**  
(*PROVERBS 19:21*)

First Sentence: *Filling his lungs with cool October air, Pastor Ezekiel Freeman started his morning vigil.*

Rivers does not disappoint.

The message is as strong as ever! **Unconditional Love**

Even with the add-in of war and some parts that dragged on to long, this was still a magnificent story and real to life characters.

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## Rissa says

Bridge to Haven 4.25??

I will always fall hard for her characters. I want them in real life and i break and ache for them. I never want her stories to end.

Abra was an orphan but not for long. The pastors wife said she would foster but foster turned into what she had already wanted keeping her. As Abra grew she fell in love with music.

Then her mother died and her father thought it too much to handle so she was given to a new family. She hated them. They were rude and didnt really want her. She resented her father and her new 'family'.

Have i told you yet that im going to marry a Joshua. As soon as Josh Hutcherson I knew Josh was for me so falling for this Joshua and his charming ways was oh too easy.

When josh goes to fight in the war Abra is devastated her friend her love left. As she writes letter back and froth with josh each time she is concerned that she will never see him again that something will go wrong in japan.

"If you let him die, God, i'll hate you forever. I swear i will"

Abra grows up and moves out but she got involved with the wrong guy and her life went from freedom to a new kind of prison.

Abra is now Lena and Lena is a movie star. She on the top of the movie world. Every guy wants her and every girl wants to be her, her family just wants her back home.

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## Ane Mulligan says

Francine Rivers is perhaps the best novelist of our time. Her ability to tell a story is extraordinary. In Bridge to Haven, she quickly captured me with her characters and pulled me into the story of this prodigal daughter. It's a story you can't forget. I predict it will become a blockbuster like Redeeming Love. Novel Rocket and I give it our highest recommendation. It's a 5-star must read. Bridge to Haven has been added to my Top Ten for 2014 and My All Time Favorites List.

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## Natalie Vellacott says

I only made it a third of the way through this book. I stopped reading due to the sexual content--an extremely detailed bedroom scene which was effectively a rape as the victim had expressed that she didn't want to participate.

I have read some great books by Rivers and others that I really didn't like recently. This was probably the worst in terms of the graphic detail and I don't understand really why she included it. She managed to do a great job in *The Atonement Child*, which also has a rape scene, of dealing with the matter sensitively whilst still telling the story and without the graphic detail. But unfortunately *Bridge to Haven* is a definite fail.

I also was a little uncomfortable with an "innocent" romance developing between two of the main characters because although they were not biologically related, they had grown up in the same household and must've known each other as brother and sister from a young age. The scenes where the male party begins to experience lustful feelings towards the girl were a little weird given the original nature of their relationship. Also, the descriptions of them were again quite graphic.

I can't comment on the Hollywood storyline as I didn't read that far but others reviews state that it involves strip clubs and the like. If that is the case, then judging by the graphic details that I have already endured, I'm glad I stopped reading when I did.

I don't recommend this book due to the graphic sexual content.

For those seeking a cleaner read by Francine Rivers (and to prove that I'm not just being deliberately controversial) try *The Atonement Child* [<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>] or *And the Shofar Blew* [<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>] or even *The Last Sin Eater* [<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>] but avoid *Redeeming Love* [<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>] *The Scarlet Thread* is mediocre [<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>]. Enjoy!

Check out my Francine Rivers shelf!

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## Krystal says

This. I'm still so raw and fresh from reading it, I will probably edit this review a thousand times. But where so many of Francine Rivers books leave me thinking, processing, uplifted (though not always), this one did not. Instead, I just feel blank. Void, maybe? Let me try to break down what went wrong.

As always, Rivers' characters are so deep. what they lack in passion or dialogue is made up in 'real'. I not only empathize with Abra Matthews, I know that if I were put in her shoes, I would think and feel as she does. Not to say that I relate to Abra, because I don't. But Rivers' writes in such a FULL way (rich might be the word? moving? deep?). I feel enveloped by the character. Not that I lose myself but just so that I know

her in ways you don't even get to know your best friend. And I've moved into creepster territory, but Im just trying to communicate why I love her books.

The reason this one fell short is not because I wasn't drawn in, but because I was unconvinced. Now don't get me wrong. I believed her guilt and her aversion to never facing home. To never facing those she loved with her shame. What I don't understand is her redemption- which, is key. With Christ, our guilt is only part of the story. And I NEEDED TO UNDERSTAND HER REDEMPTION. It felt too easy. Too wash away. Too rainbow. Her scars were deep and her shame was monstrous. I know because I felt it- because I was made to understand her need for a saviour. And I did. I did so deeply. But when the prodigal returned home, she was embraced. Which is to be expected- no complaints there. I was pleased and happy with the love of Christ shown by those who follow him and I believe that he is faithful to forgive our sins.

But I have finally put my finger on what this story lacked. Abra never struggled to forgive herself. It is like it was enough for her to know she was loved by others and by Christ. For someone who became real in her guilt and baggage, she barely even struggled to uproot her shame- something that had taken over and kept her from home in the first place. And in Christ there is freedom (AMEN!) but there is also no insta-remedy for the consequences of sin.

Christians do not have it rainbows and butterflies. And a lot of times that is because we won't allow God to give us everything he wants. But for someone who walked to road Abra did, who walked tight-fisted for years and was young when she walked into heartache- she should have struggled thought it. I needed her to struggle through it so that I could have answers too. So that I can learn to forgive myself. Because like I said, Rivers pulls you in. And I have not recovered from the shame and pain that I experienced for the first 400 pages. While I believe Christ is Almighty and Good and capable of forgiving the worst, I am much less convinced I can do that for myself. So while I come out of the world of Abra, I still cannot let go of the darkness she pulled me into. But only the best writing could create such darkness.

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## **Dawn says**

This is probably one of the best books I've read so far this year, if not the BEST! Anyway. Moving on with my summary/review. :) There are slight spoilers to follow.

Summary (my words): Abra Matthews was abandoned as a baby under the bridge in Haven. Though she was soon placed into the home of a loving family and then later adopted, she grows up guarded and wary. When a handsome LA playboy arrives in town, she throws her upbringing aside and runs away. Soon Abra realizes that the price she's paid isn't worth the Hollywood glamour of the 1950's. Given a new identity, Lena Scott, she soon becomes the newest thing on the silver screen since Marilyn Monroe, and few know her real name or the price she's paid to be somebody. Those who love her back home have prayed for her everyday in the hopes that someday, someday, somehow, Abra will find her way home. With God on her tail, her life disillusioned, she doesn't know who she is anymore. Can Abra bring herself to return home to those who love her - her family, her pastor, the young man who has been the best friend she's ever known?

My thoughts: It has been a long time since I read a Francine Rivers book. I've read all of hers. While my personal favorite is (and still remains) Atonement Child, this one gripped me from the first page. I started this book late Monday night, brought it to work on Tuesday and finished it Tuesday night. Not since the times I read older Kingsbury novels, Joanne Bischoff's Cadence of Grace series, and Katie Ganshert's Broken Kind of Beautiful has a novel tore my heart out like this one did.

Rivers has written the characters in such a way to cause the reader to feel for them. I found myself wanting to shake Abra while at the same time I was weeping for her. And Joshua. Yes, he was honorable. Yes, he was "perfect." I loved his struggle in learning to trust. Pastor Zeke. I loved how he also struggled with letting go. For me, one of the most touching scenes was when Abra came home and runs into Pastor Zeke's waiting arms. Talk about a beautiful showing of forgiveness and redemption right there!

Other reviews are saying that this may not be Francine's best. That's their opinion. In mine, this is going to fast become a favorite. Still, don't just take my word on how much I loved this book, read the opinions of others and make your own decision.

I rented this book from the library and read it for pure pleasure (that and it's been on my reading list for ages and fit a Scattegories category on Goodreads). My thoughts and opinions are my own.

Recommended to fans of Francine Rivers, Joanne Bischoff, Katie Ganshert, Karen Kingsbury, Nora Roberts, Susan May Warren, Lynn Austin, Denise Hunter, women's fiction

Rating - 5 stars

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### **Staci says**

Lots of emotion through reading Bridge to Haven. At times, I was completely engaged and at other times found the detail about Abra's fall difficult to read.

Ultimately, as with other Francine River novels, I found Abra's story to be full of God's love for us despite the mistakes we make. Abra felt unloved and chased after what she thought would bring fulfillment.

I completely adored Joshua and Mitzi. They were steady lights of God's love.

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### **Sarah says**

I struggled with how I wanted to rate this book. On one hand, it's Francine Rivers, the writer of my beloved Redeeming Love and Mark of the Lion series, and I must admit, Mrs Rivers is not afraid to go there! Life events that most Christian writers would skim over or not even attempt to write about, Francine takes us to those dark subjects to make the redemption even more powerful. On the other hand, I can't compare this to Redeeming Love. I had a really hard time connecting with any of the characters. I confess a few times, I wanted to stop and move on to other books on my TBR pile. Yet something kept me pulled in to see how this story would complete, and in true Rivers style- I may not have connected with the characters, but you can bet the last 100 pages had me reaching for the tissues. She still has the gift to hit those emotional places. Unfortunately, I don't see Bridge to Haven making my re-read every few years shelf, but was worth the new release read.

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### **Kathryn says**

This was a good read, with some complex issues to consider. I generally enjoy Francine Rivers and this one

was no exception. It was sad to read about the choices Abra felt she was forced to make and her resultant life, but Francine Rivers' description of how she felt made Abra's thought processes believable (if misguided).

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## **Dale Harcombe says**

Three and a half stars

This is only the second Francine Rivers book I have read. I enjoyed it and sympathized with the Abra, the baby rescued by Pastor Zeke. Despite the love shown to Abra by Pastor Zeke, his wife Marianne, and others in the community, Abra finds herself unable to believe anyone really loves her. As a result she goes looking for love in all the wrong places. The author does a good job of making Abra sympathetic, despite the choices she makes and the hurt she brings to those who love her.

Through the compromises and choices she ends up a movie star, with her name changed to Lena Scott. The novel recounts a lot of names of those she meets, including Elvis Presley and movie stars of the 1950s era like Susan Hayward, Elizabeth Taylor and many others. This is where I started to become less interested in the story. I'm not a fan of reading of the Hollywood lifestyle. It made me sad to see the choices anyone makes to become a 'star' or even sometimes to survive in the movie industry.

While I liked Pastor Zeke and his son Joshua and their unwavering love for Abra, it was almost like they were too perfect. They would have been more believable if we had seen their flaws. I enjoyed the book and it did involve emotions of anger and tears, I thought the change in Abra ended up being resolved a little too quickly. This is definitely written with the Christian market in mind and refers a lot to God, to prayer, bible verses and hymns, so I am not sure whether that would end up grating on those who did not believe so that they end up not reading the book. And that would be a shame as this is a story that clearly shows God's grace and forgiveness.

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## **Callie says**

I'm telling you now, this review will contain spoilers! Consider yourself warned.

Bridge To Haven was a sweeping novel, the story of Abra Matthews, who was left under a bridge as an infant and found by a pastor. Rivers knows how to keep you turning the pages, and overall, I enjoyed the actual reading of this novel. I felt like I became friends with the characters. In the end, it ends up being a story of redemption when Abra finally gives her life over to the Lord.

Still, I struggle to give it a better rating for the following reasons.

I forget how Rivers tends to take her main characters and rip their lives completely apart before they start to put things back together. That's what happened with Abra. She gets involved with a bad guy, and runs away with him, even though she knows he's only after her physically. He ends up practically using her as a semi-willing sex slave. This was hard for me to read, not just because it was a disturbing storyline, but also because I found it hard to believe in a way. Abra seemed over-the-top naive. I know that in real life some girls do go after guys who treat them like dirt, but I found this whole storyline hard to relate to.

After some more ripping apart of Abra's life, she finally loses everything and goes back home to Haven with Joshua. Joshua was another complaint for me. I think Rivers was trying to make him somehow representative of Jesus (based on the name and a couple symbolic things in the story), but Joshua was over-the-top perfect in this story. To me, no human written character should be portrayed as perfect. Only one man lived a perfect life, and that WAS Jesus. In the afterword Rivers even says something about how Joshua wasn't perfect, and I was thinking...how exactly was he not? He seriously didn't do one thing wrong in the entire story. I dislike stories where one character is a complete train wreck, and the other is completely perfect, and ladies...let's just all realize that this guy was totally a figment of River's imagination. There isn't a man who ever lived who treats his romantic love as perfectly as Josh treats Abra in this book. I think there is some danger in reading books where the male romantic interest has zero flaws.

Finally, Joshua and Abra eventually get married, and as I feared would happen, Rivers goes into detail about their wedding night. Not completely explicit detail, but explicit enough to make me frantically flip the pages with my cheeks burning. And I'm a married woman. I think it's worth noting that I would NEVER let my teenage daughter read this book, for this scene alone. Three complaints here:

1) This much detail is totally inappropriate for a Christian book, in my opinion. Erotic literature is the equivalent of porn for women, and while Rivers avoids words that would technically make this "erotic"...well, there was enough to make me blush, feel embarrassed, and skip past a couple pages. Sometimes what isn't said explicitly is just as powerful as what is said explicitly.

2) Once again, Joshua is just too perfect in how he handles the whole situation! Abra is obviously nervous about the wedding night with all the trauma she has suffered in that area, and he somehow does all the right things to make her feel completely comfortable and "please" her (eek, I feel weird even typing that, because this whole scene was embarrassing, even though I just skimmed it). Which leads me to my final point...

3) Do you know how unrealistic this scene is? Real life couples often have to work for YEARS to overcome their sexual baggage and abusive pasts to have a healthy sexual relationship. The characters here just overcome all of Abra's issues in one passion-filled night, and it's completely absurd. I imagine this portrayal could be somewhat discouraging to people who are still working through sexual issues in their relationship.

So I took off a few stars because of Joshua's ridiculous perfection, and what was in my opinion inappropriate sexual content. The story was good, but I could have done without those things I listed above.

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## **Loraine says**

I have read many Francine Rivers books over the years. They have all been strong Christian based stories until this one. I see that it has many 4 and 5 star reviews, but I couldn't even finish it. Supposedly the main character is redeemed at the end, but I was not going to wade through pages and pages of trash to find that out. I honestly felt like I was reading a Harlequin rated book or something off the newsstand at the front of the grocery store. This book contains pre-marital sex, alcohol and drug abuse, as well as physical abuse and that was all before I quit not even halfway through the book. I guess that Rivers was trying to show that anyone can be redeemed, but I didn't need to read the detailed info to know that. Another author who apparently has slid the slippery slope into trying to straddle the secular as well as the Christian book market.

I would not recommend this book.



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## Shantelle says

\*Heartfelt sigh\* ... I have just finished an incredible book. -Riveting, heart-wrenching, breathtaking, glorious book. The amazingness of God and the power of prayer are so freely and deeply shown. The dear characters, so real and relatable. The tragedgies, the hurt, the rebellion, the redemption...

Abra is abandoned under a bridge as a newborn, and then given away by the man she knew to be her father. The hurt and anger follow her into her teen years, and she starts seeking love in the most dangerous of places. One thing leads to another, and soon she finds she's in a position she never thought she'd be... as a movie star. Her name is changed, bridges are burnt. She's been used, abused, heartbroken, tossed-out, and finally, controlled. She lives the "glamorous" life of a star; but inside, where the old Abra Matthew faintly lurks, she just longs to go home to Haven. But that's impossible, of course...

I fell in love with these characters' stories: Abra, Pastor Zeke, Joshua, Susan, Mitzi, Penny, Peter, Priscilla, and all the others. They were so real. I felt their pain, loss, joy, fear... So sad to leave them, wish there was more to read!!

*Bridge to Haven* really just touched my heart. Several times I almost cried with either pain or joy. The end of chapter 17 was a monumental turning point... yes, I almost cried there too; you'll see why! :)

There was definitely more sensuality and details than I usually expect in Christian-fiction, yet it was not like some books where sordid acts are glorified even as they're portrayed as wrong. Francine Rivers didn't glorify sinful acts... she made them out for what they really are: ugly and damaging. There was nothing exciting or fun about the young man who convinced a sixteen-year-old hurting girl to run away with him. In the end, he had the most basest of instincts, lust and rage. -And it was heart-breaking and awful to see him use an innocent, albeit confused, girl in such an ugly way. My heart broke for the girl as I watched her struggle through the consequences.

**\*\*Spoiler Alert!!\*\*** However, though there might have been more details than needed here too, I can only say that the marriage and brief wedding night sort-of scene between Joshua and Abra was stunningly beautiful. It was arranged by God, and as God intended. Broken things were mended. Shattered purity was made whole and clean. Yes, this was another part that almost brought me to tears. It just was SO amazing to see Abra restored... to realize that the relationship between a man and his wife as God intended it is a beautiful thing. But yeah, I think it could have been every bit as beautiful without that amount of "sensual detail" that it had. **\*\*Spoiler Alert\*\***

Yeah... I still think Christian authors need to be really careful about how much detail/sensuality they add to their novels. It's a fine line. We do not need to experience romance to that level between characters. We'll experience our own romance when the time is right!! I'd rather read books with strictly clean/sweet romances... but this story was rather different. Details seemed needed, though definitely not as much as were added. I don't know. I guess you can see what you think. But definitely this book is for a mature audience.

But overall, Francine Rivers knows how to write a redemptive story that just tugs at your heart. At the end, I think, "God, You are awesome, glory be to Your name!"

So yes, heart-breaking, yet ultimately beautiful to watch this story unfold. *A Bridge to Haven*, unforgettable

spiritual journey to hope, forgiveness, wholeness, and joy.  
Simply beautiful.

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### **Lyn says**

Francine Rivers has done it again--KEPT ME AWAKE AT NIGHT! *Bridge to Haven* is riveting reading--just as riveting as *Redeeming Love* and *Leota's Garden* my two favorite Francine Rivers' novels thusfar.

It's very easy to see why Francine has become a New York Times best-selling author. Her heroine Abra is orphaned and left under a bridge. Fortunately God leads Pastor Zeke to the spot where he quickly tucks Abra close to his heart where she stays the rest of her life.

But no life can be lived without pain and loss. Abra is no exception. Some parts of *Bridge to Haven* were hard for me to read, kind of like in my own childhood when I watched my brother do things, I knew were going to get him into all kinds of trouble.

I identified most with Joshua, Pastor Zeke's son, who is forced to do the same with Abra.

But don't worry, the ending won't make you wish you hadn't read the book. God's children always have hope and redemption just waiting for them.

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### **A. R. says**

Wow...I am surprised by all the raving reviews.

I am a fan of Francine Rivers, but not of this book. It was riddled with tedious lists of characters activities. Pastor Zeke walked here, ate here, talked to this person, said a prayer for that person. Far too much telling for my taste. I wanted to just skim over these endless lists (almost every character had them) to get to the meet of the story.

Rivers did a nice job in making Abra a sympathetic character, even with all of her bad decisions. But from a Christian novel stand point, I almost found her too sympathetic. For all of the bad choices she made, it was easy for the reader to excuse the behavior because of her past. And that's okay, it was good to understand where she was coming from, why she would get taken in by the kind of men she did, but it also made her 'redemption' expected, even deserving. How different this story would be if she had come from a traditional, loving background and made those same decisions.

And although Pastor Zeke and Joshua talked about themselves as having flaws, it was hard to find them. These men were too perfect. Too patient. Too trusting. Too giving. Too self-sacrificing. I think I would have liked to see Joshua's PTSD a more pronounced. It was too easily solved with having one person who had similar experiences to talk to.

And as for the surprise plot twist?? Saw that one coming from the moment the character stepped into the

story. It was simply a matter of waiting for the big reveal. Once it came (far too late in the book with little fanfare) it was resolved too easily, then explained away by simply saying that a sign of a Christian life is forgiveness. (another moment of telling rather than showing)

And this is the first time I have seen a Christian writer try to write a sex scene in a romantic but clean way. It was clean, but lacked any emotion. I found myself rolling my eyes. The entire scene was unnecessary. And quite honestly, unbelievable considering other events in the book.

I like Christian lit. I like reading about people who have strong belief in God and still struggle with the trials of life. I like when their faith is rewarded and they feel God's love and redemption. But I found the Christian element in this book far too heavy handed. Granted, Pastor Zeke, a main character, was a preacher. But it seemed that everyone except the villains (and they were painted with no redeeming qualities at all) spent every conversation proclaiming God's love.

Overall, I expected more and was left wanting.

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