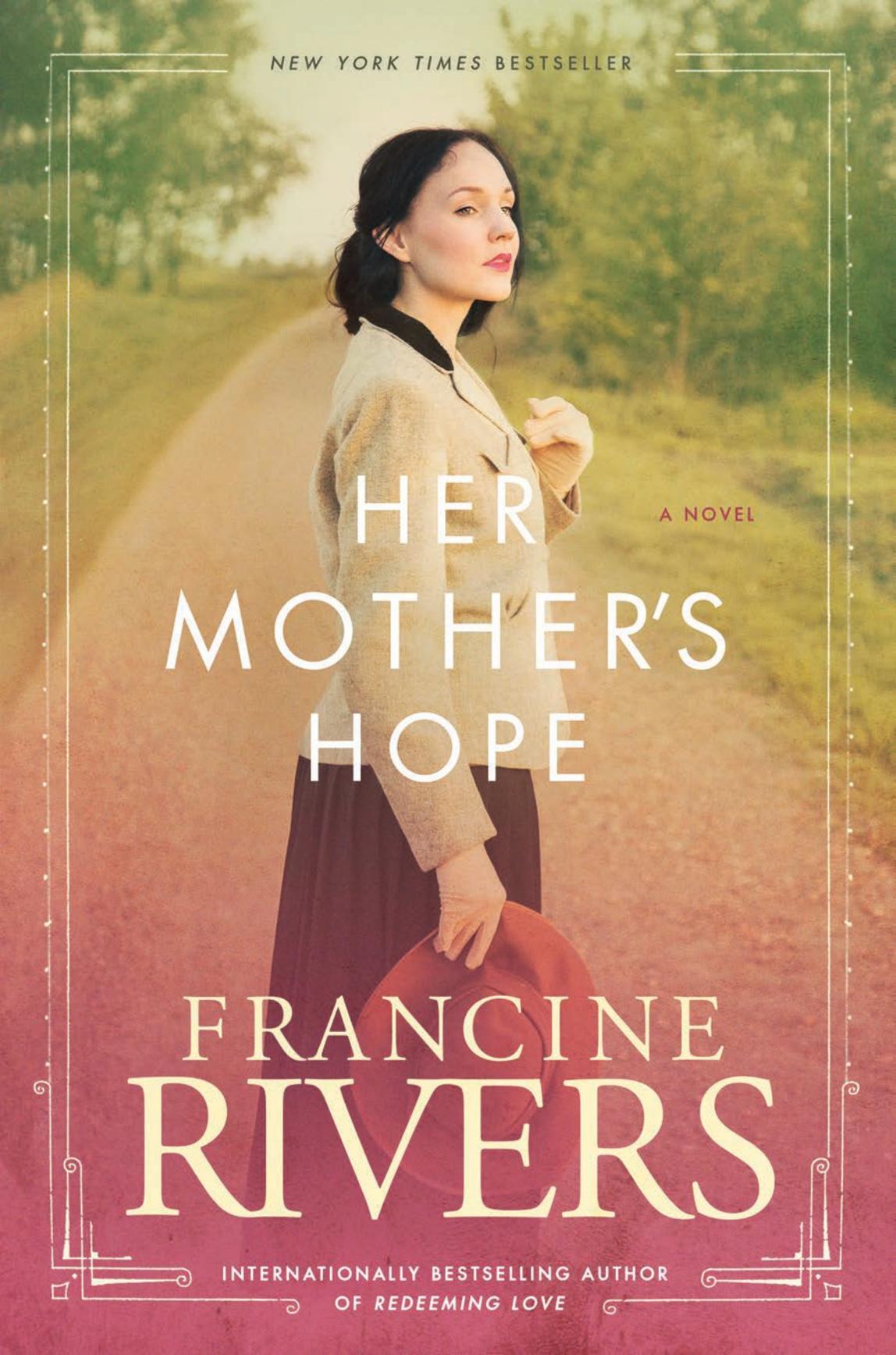


NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

A woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a light-colored, textured jacket over a dark skirt, stands on a dirt road. She is holding a red hat in her left hand. The background is a soft-focus landscape with trees and a path leading into the distance. The overall color palette is warm, with greens, yellows, and reds.

HER
MOTHER'S
HOPE

A NOVEL

FRANCINE
RIVERS

INTERNATIONALLY BESTSELLING AUTHOR
OF REDEEMING LOVE

PRAISE FOR THE MARTA'S LEGACY SERIES

“Writers like Rivers are why people buy Christian fiction: it’s dramatic, engaging . . . [and] this well-told tale will have readers eagerly awaiting the story’s resolution.”

PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

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“*Her Mother’s Hope* has all the meaty elements of a blockbuster. . . . It’s a solid novel of family relationships, a page-turner that appeals far beyond both the romance and the Christian categories.”

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CHRISTIAN RETAILING, Top Pick

“Top-notch writing and storytelling. This makes *Her Mother’s Hope* quite the saga and an exceptional work of historical fiction.”

BOOKREPORTER.COM

“The conclusion to Rivers’s two-book saga featuring mothers and daughters is both engrossing and emotionally satisfying. . . . The sweeping time period from the 1950s through the present day allows the reader to engage personally in the amazing narrative.”

ROMANTIC TIMES, 4½ star review

“Rivers has written another page-turner. . . . This heartfelt and sweeping saga is as ambitious as its central matriarch.”

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— A NOVEL —

FRANCINE
RIVERS



Tyndale House Publishers
Carol Stream, Illinois

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Her Mother's Hope is a work of fiction. Where real people, events, establishments, organizations, or locales appear, they are used fictitiously. All other elements of the novel are drawn from the author's imagination.

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MARTA

1

STEFFISBURG, SWITZERLAND, 1901

Marta usually loved Sundays. It was the only day Papa closed the tailor shop and Mama had a rest. The family dressed in their finest clothes and walked to church, Papa and Mama ahead, Marta's older brother, Hermann, behind them, and Marta and her younger sister, Elise, bringing up the rear. Usually other families joined them along the way. Marta would watch eagerly for her best friend, Rosie Gilgan, who'd run down the hill to join her and walk the rest of the way to the old Romanesque church with its arches mortared shut and the white clock tower.

Today, Marta hung her head, wishing she could run away and hide among the pines and alders while the townsfolk gathered for services. She could sit on her favorite fallen tree and ask God why Papa despised her so much and seemed so set on making her suffer. Today, she wouldn't have complained if Papa had told her to stay home and work in the shop alone and not step foot outside the door for a week, though it would take longer than that for the bruises to fade.

Despite evidence of the beating he had given her, Papa insisted everyone attend services. She wore a knitted cap and kept her chin down,

hoping no one would notice. It wasn't the first time she had borne the marks of his anger. When people came close, Marta shifted the woolen scarf or turned her face away.

When they came into the churchyard, Papa sent Mama ahead with Elise and Hermann. He caught Marta by the elbow and spoke into her ear. "You'll sit in back."

"People will want to know why."

"And I'll tell them the truth. You're being punished for defying me." His fingers dug in painfully, but she refused to utter a sound of pain. "Keep your head down. No one wants to see your ugly face." He let go of her and went inside.

Fighting tears, Marta went in alone and stepped into the last row of straight-backed chairs.

She watched her father join Mama. When he glanced back, she tucked her chin quickly, looking up again only after he had seated himself. Her sister, Elise, looked back over her shoulder, face far too pale and strained for a child. Mama leaned close, whispering, and Elise turned face-forward again. Hermann sat between Mama and Papa, his head turning to the right and left. No doubt he was looking for friends and would disappear as soon as the services ended.

Rosie passed by and sat near the front. The Gilgans had eight children and took up an entire row. Rosie glanced toward Marta's mother and father, then back. Marta hid behind Herr Becker, sitting in front of her. She waited briefly and peered around the baker again.

All the murmuring stopped when the minister stepped into the pulpit. He opened the service with prayer. Joining with the congregation, Marta said the prayer of confession, and she heard the minister's assurance of God's mercy and forgiveness. As the creed and Scriptures were read, Marta let her mind drift like the snow blowing across the Alpine meadows above Steffisburg. She imagined herself spreading her arms like wings and letting the white swirling flakes lift and carry her wherever God willed.

And where would that be? she wondered.

The minister's voice rose as he preached. He always said the same thing, but used different words, different examples from the Bible.

“Strive harder. Faith is dead without good works. Do not become complacent. Those who turn their backs on God are destined for hell.”

Was God like Papa, never satisfied no matter how hard she tried? Papa believed in God, but when had he ever shown her mercy? And if he believed God created everyone, then what right had Papa to complain over how tall she was, how thin, how white her skin, how large her hands and feet? Her father cursed her because she passed the school examinations “and made Hermann look a fool!”

She’d tried to defend herself. She should have known better. “Hermann doesn’t apply himself. He’d rather hike in the hills than do his studies.”

Papa came after her. Mama tried to get between, but he shoved her roughly aside. “You think you can talk to me like that and get away with it?” Marta raised her arm to protect herself, but it did no good.

“Johann, don’t!” Mama cried out.

Still gripping Marta’s arm, he turned on Mama. “Don’t you tell me—”

“How many times must we turn the other cheek, Papa?” Something white-hot rose up inside Marta when he threatened Mama.

That’s when he used his fist on her. He let go of her abruptly and stood over her. “She made me do it. You heard her! A father can’t tolerate insolence in his own home!”

Marta didn’t know she’d fainted until Mama stroked the hair back from her face. “Be still, Marta. Elise is getting a wet cloth.” Marta could hear Elise crying. “Papa’s gone to the tanner. He won’t be back for a while.” Mama took the cloth Elise held out. Marta sucked in her breath when Mama dabbed her split lip. “You shouldn’t provoke your father.”

“So it’s my fault.”

“I didn’t say that.”

“I pass the examination with the highest marks in school and get a beating for it. Where’s Hermann? Strolling along on some mountain trail?”

Mama cupped her cheek. “You must forgive your father. He lost his temper. He didn’t know what he was doing.”

Mama always made excuses for him, just as Papa made excuses for Hermann. No one made excuses for her.

"*Forgive*," Mama said. "*Seventy times seven. Forgive!*"

Marta's mouth twisted as the minister spoke of God the Father. She wished God was like Mama instead.

When the service ended, Marta waited until Papa motioned her to join the family. Head down, she fell into step beside Elise.

"Johann Schneider!"

Papa turned at Herr Gilgan's voice. The two men shook hands and talked. Hermann took advantage of the distraction to join some friends heading up the hill. Mama took Elise's hand when Frau Gilgan joined them.

"Where have you been all week?" Rosie spoke softly and Marta turned. Rosie gasped softly. "Oh, Marta." She moaned in sympathy. "Again? What was his reason this time?"

"School."

"But you passed the examination!"

"Hermann didn't."

"But that's not fair."

Marta lifted one shoulder and gave Rosie a bleak smile. "It does no good to tell him so." Rosie would never be able to understand. *Her* father adored her. Herr Gilgan adored all his children. They all worked together in the running of *Hotel Edelweiss*, encouraging one another in everything. They teased one another with good-natured humor, but never mocked or belittled anyone. If one of them had a difficulty, the others lovingly closed ranks around him and helped.

Sometimes Marta envied her friend. Every member of the Gilgan family would finish school. The boys would serve their two years in the Swiss Army and then go off to university in Bern or Zurich. Rosie and her sisters would learn fine cuisine and the art of running a large household that embraced up to thirty outsiders. She would be tutored in French, English, and Italian. If Rosie had further aspirations, her father wouldn't deny her simply because she was a girl. He would send her to university along with her brothers.

"You've been in school long enough," Papa had declared when he came back from the tanner. "You're old enough to carry your share of the financial burden."

Begging him for one more year of school had done no good at all.

Tears filled Marta's eyes. "Papa said it's enough that I can read, write, and do arithmetic."

"But you're only twelve, and if anyone in our class should make it to the university, it would be you."

"There will be no university for me. Papa said I'm done with school."

"But why?"

"Papa says too much school fills a girl's head with nonsense." By *nonsense* Papa meant ambition. Marta burned with it. Marta had hoped that with enough schooling, she would have choices about what to do with her life. Papa said school had puffed her up and she needed to be brought down to where she belonged.

Rosie took Marta's hand. "Maybe he'll change his mind and let you come back to school. I'm sure Herr Scholz will want to talk to him about it."

Herr Scholz might try, but her father wouldn't listen. Once he made up his mind, not even an avalanche would change it. "It'll do no good, Rosie."

"What will you do now?"

"Papa plans to hire me out."

"*Marta!*"

Marta jumped at Papa's bellowing voice. Scowling, he motioned sharply for her to come. Rosie didn't let go of her hand as they joined their families.

Frau Gilgan stared at Marta. "What happened to your face?" She cast an angry look at Papa.

Papa stared back at her. "She fell down the stairs." Papa gave Marta a look of warning. "She's always been clumsy. Just look at those big hands and feet."

Frau Gilgan's dark eyes snapped. "She'll grow into them." Her husband put his hand beneath her elbow.

Mama held out her hand to Marta. "Come along. Elise is cold. We need to go home." Elise huddled close to Mama's side, not looking at anyone.

Rosie hugged Marta and whispered, "I'll ask Papa to hire you!"

Marta didn't dare hope her father would agree—he knew how much she would enjoy working for the Gilgans.

Papa went out that afternoon and didn't return home until late in the evening. He smelled of beer and seemed quite pleased with himself. "Marta!" He slapped his hand on the table. "I have found work for you."

She would work for the Beckers at the bakery every morning. "You must be there by four in the morning." She would spend three afternoons a week working for the Zimmers. The doctor thought his wife would welcome some freedom from tending their fractious new baby. "And Frau Fuchs says she can use you to tend her hives. It's getting colder, and she'll be ready to harvest the honey soon. You'll work nights as long as she needs you." He leaned back in his chair. "And you'll work at *Hotel Edelweiss* two days a week." He watched her face closely. "Don't think you're going to have tea and cookies with your little friend anymore. You're there to work. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Papa." Marta clasped her hands in front of her, trying not to show her pleasure.

"And don't ask for anything. Not from any of them. Herr Becker will pay in bread, Frau Fuchs in honey when the time comes. As to the others, they will settle with me and not you."

Heat spread through Marta's limbs, surging up her neck into her cheeks and burning there like lava beneath pale earth. "Am I to receive nothing, Papa? Nothing at all?"

"You receive a roof over your head and food on your plate. You receive clothes on your back. As long as you live in my house, whatever you make rightfully belongs to me." He turned his head away. "Anna!" he shouted at Mama. "Are you done with that dress for Frau Keller yet?"

"I'm working on it now, Johann."

Scowling, Papa shouted again. "She expects delivery by the end of the week! If you don't have it ready by then, she'll take her business to another dressmaker!" Papa jerked his head. "Go help your mother."

Marta joined Mama by the fire. She had a box of colored threads on the table at her side and black wool partially embroidered spread across her lap. She coughed violently into a cloth, folded and tucked it in her apron pocket before taking up her sewing again. Anyone could see by

her pallor and the dark circles under her eyes that Mama wasn't well again. Mama had weak lungs. Tonight, her lips had a faint bluish tint. "Help your sister, Marta. She's developing another headache."

Elise had spent all evening on her sampler, brow furrowed over every stitch in pained concentration. Marta had helped her until Papa returned. About the only thing Elise could do well was hem, leaving Mama and Marta to do the fine embroidery work. Elise struggled as much as Hermann in school, though not for the same reasons. At ten, Elise could barely read and write. However, what she lacked in intellect and dexterity was overlooked because of her rare and delicate beauty. Mama's greatest pleasure took place every morning when she brushed and braided Elise's waist-length white-blond hair. She had flawless alabaster skin and wide, angelic blue eyes. Papa asked nothing of her, taking pride in her beauty, acting sometimes as though he owned a priceless piece of art.

Marta worried about her sister. Papa might be right about suitors, but he didn't understand Elise's deep-seated fears. She had an almost-desperate dependence upon Mama and became hysterical when Papa went into one of his rages, though never in Elise's life had a hand been laid on her in anger. Papa would have an eye out for a settled man with money and position for Elise.

Marta prayed nightly that God would bless her sister with a husband who would cherish and protect her—and be rich enough to hire others to cook, clean, and raise the children! Elise would never be able to carry out such responsibilities.

Marta lifted a stool and set it beside her mother's chair. "Frau Keller always wants things done yesterday."

"She's a good customer." Mama laid a section of skirt carefully over Marta's lap so they could work on it together.

"*Good* is not a word I would use, Mama. The woman is a tyrant."

"It's not wrong to know what you want."

"If you're willing to pay for it." Marta fumed. Yes, Papa would ask Frau Keller to pay for the additional work, but Frau Keller would refuse. If Papa pressed, Frau Keller would become indignant "at such treatment" and threaten to take her business "to someone more appreciative

of my generosity.” She would remind Papa that she ordered six dresses a year, and he should be thankful for her business in these hard times. Papa would apologize profusely, then add what he could to the amount Herr Keller owed for the suits Papa made him. And Papa often had to wait six months for even partial payment. No wonder the Kellers were rich. They clung to their money like lichen to rock. “If I were Papa, I’d demand a portion of the money before beginning the work, and full payment before any garment left the shop.”

Mama laughed softly. “So much fire from a twelve-year-old girl.”

Marta wondered how Mama would ever finish the skirt on time. She threaded a needle with pink silk and set to work on flower petals. “Papa has hired me out, Mama.”

Mama sighed. “I know, *Liebling*.” She quickly drew the cloth from her apron pocket to cover her mouth. When the spasm passed, she fought for breath as she pushed the cloth back into its hiding place.

“Your cough is getting worse.”

“I know. It comes from the years I worked in the cigar factory. It’ll get better when summer comes.” In summer, Mama could sit outside and work instead of sitting by a smoking fire.

“It never goes away completely, Mama. You should see the doctor.” Perhaps when Marta worked for Frau Zimmer, she might speak with the doctor about what could be done to help Mama.

“Let’s not worry about that now. Frau Keller must have her dress!”

Marta quickly became used to her work schedule. She got up while it was still dark, dressed quickly, and went up the street to the bakery. When Frau Becker let her in the front door, the room smelled of fresh baking bread. Marta went into the kitchen and chopped nuts for *Nusstorten* while Frau Becker stirred batter for *Schokoladenkuchen*.

“We’re making *Magenbrot* today,” Herr Becker announced as he stretched out a long snake of dough and cut it into small pieces. “Marta, dip those in butter and roll them in cinnamon and raisins, and then arrange them in the angel cake tins.”

Marta worked quickly, aware that both of the Beckers watched her. Frau Becker poured the dark batter into cake forms and handed the wooden spoon to Marta. “Go ahead. Lick it clean.”

Herr Becker laughed. “Ah, see how the girl can smile, Fanny.” He punched dough down. “You learn quickly, Marta.” He winked at his wife. “We’ll have to teach her how to make Epiphany cakes this coming Christmas. *Ja?*”

“And *Lebkuchen*.” Frau Becker winked at Marta. Mama loved the spicy gingerbread. “And *Marzipan*.” Frau Becker took the spoon and tossed it into the sink. “I’ll teach you how to make *Butterplätzchen*.” She set butter, flour, and sugar on the worktable. “And tomorrow, I’ll teach you how to make anise cookies.”

When the bakery opened for business, Frau Becker gave Marta two breakfast loaves as payment. “You’re a good worker.”

Marta took the bread to Mama and had a bowl of *Müsli*. After doing her chores and eating an early lunch, she headed down the road past the schoolhouses to the doctor’s house.

Frau Zimmer looked distressed when she opened the door. “Here! Take him!” She thrust her screaming baby into Marta’s arms and grabbed her shawl. “I’m going to visit a friend.” She slipped around Marta and headed off without a backward glance.

Marta went inside and closed the door so people wouldn’t hear the baby wailing. She paced, singing hymns. When that didn’t calm little Evrard, she tried rocking him. She checked his diaper. Finally, exasperated, she put him down on the rug. “Go ahead and scream your head off.”

The baby stopped crying and rolled onto his stomach. Arching his back, he reached his arms out and kicked his feet. Marta laughed. “You just wanted a little freedom, didn’t you?” She collected scattered toys and dropped them in front of him. He kicked his legs harder, gurgling in delight. He squealed, his hands opening and closing. “Reach for it! I’m not giving it to you.” He managed to scoot a few inches and grasp a rattle. Marta clapped. “Good for you, Evrard!” He rolled onto his back.

When little Evrard wore himself out, Marta picked him up and

rocked him to sleep. Frau Zimmer came in an hour later, looking refreshed. She stopped and listened, looking somewhat alarmed. "Is he all right?" She hurried over to the crib and peered in. "He's sleeping! He never sleeps in the afternoon. What did you do?"

"I let him play on the rug. He tried to crawl."

The following afternoon, Marta went up the hill to *Hotel Edelweiss*, where Frau Gilgan put her to work stripping beds and remaking them with fresh mattress sheets and duvets for the feather beds. Fluffing them full of air, she rolled them on the end of the bed, then took the laundry downstairs to the wash room. Frau Gilgan worked with her, sharing amusing stories of past guests. "Of course, you have some who are not pleased with anything you do and others who break their legs skiing."

Two of Rosie's older sisters manned the washtubs and kept great pots of water boiling on the woodstove. Marta's arms ached from stirring linen; pushing sheets and duvets down, around, and over; spreading folds; and stirring again. Kristen, the older girl, hooked a sheet and dragged it up, folding and wringing it into tight ropes, letting the water cascade back into the washtub. Then she shook the sheet out into a tub of steaming rinse water.

Snowflakes caught on the window frames, but perspiration dripped from Marta's face. She blotted it away with her sleeve.

"Oh!" Frau Gilgan came over and held out her hands, strong and square, reddened and callused from years of washing. "Let me see your hands, Marta." Frau Gilgan turned Marta's hands palms up and clucked her tongue. "Blisters. I should not have worked you so hard on your first day, but you didn't complain. Your hands will be so sore you won't be able to make a stitch."

"But there's a whole pile of sheets yet to do."

Frau Gilgan put her fists on her ample hips and laughed. "*Ja*, and that's why I have daughters." She put her arm around Marta. "Go on upstairs. Rosie will be back from school by now. She'll want to have tea with you before you leave. And if you've time, she needs help with geography."

Marta said she'd be delighted.

Rosie jumped from her chair. "Marta! I forgot you started work

today. I'm so glad you're here! I missed you at school. It's not the same without you. No one to answer Herr Scholz's difficult questions."

"Your mother says you need help with your geography."

"Oh, not now. I've so much to tell you. Let's go for a walk."

Marta knew she'd have to listen to the latest escapades of Arik Brechtwald. Rosie had been in love with him since the day he fished her out of a creek. It did no good to remind her Arik had caused the fall in the first place. He'd dared her to cross the Zug. She'd made it halfway across when she slipped on a rock and slithered down over a small waterfall before Arik could catch hold of her. He'd lifted her out and carried her to the bank. Ever since then, Arik had been Rosie's knight in shining armor.

Snow sifted softly from the clouds overhead, adding thickness to the blanket of white over Steffisburg. Smoke curled up like ghostly fingers from chimneys, dissipating in the chill afternoon air. While Rosie chattered on gaily, Marta trudged along beside her. White drifts covered the Alpine meadow, which would in a few months turn verdant green with splashes of red, yellow, and blue blossoms tempting and nourishing Frau Fuchs's bees. Rosie brushed snow off a log and sat where they could look down on *Hotel Edelweiss* and Steffisburg below. If the day had been clear, they could have seen *Schloss Thun* and the *Thunersee* like a sheet of gray glass.

Today, low clouds made the sun look like a white, blurred ball ready to bounce off the mountains beyond Interlaken.

Marta's breath made steam. Tears welled up as she listened to Rosie's musings about Arik. Her friend didn't have a care in the world other than whether Arik liked her or not. Pressing her mouth tight, Marta tried not to feel jealous. Maybe Papa was right. She and Rosie would be friends for a little while longer, and then their different situations would build a wall between them. Marta worked for the Gilgans now. She wasn't the friend who came to call or have tea or sit and chat while Rosie's mother put out anise cookies on a silver platter and hot chocolate in fine porcelain cups. Everything was about to change, and Marta couldn't bear it.

Now that Papa had removed her from school, she would only be

qualified to be a servant or tend someone's fractious baby. She could help Mama with dressmaking, but Mama made so little money when one considered how many hours she worked for women like Frau Keller, who expected perfection for a pittance. And Mama never saw a franc of what she made. Papa held the purse strings and complained bitterly about how little they had, though he always managed to find enough for beer.

Rosie put her arm around Marta's shoulders. "Don't look so sad."

Marta stood abruptly and moved away. "Herr Scholz was going to teach me French. I could've continued with Latin. If I knew even one more language, I might be able to find a decent job someday in a nice shop in Interlaken. If my father has his way, I'll never be more than a servant." As soon as the bitter words poured out, shame filled her. How could she say such things to Rosie? "I'm not ungrateful to your parents. Your mother was so kind to me today. . . ."

"They love you like a daughter."

"Because you've loved me like a sister."

"That's not going to change just because you're not in school. I wish I could quit. I'd rather stay home and help my mother than try to cram facts into my head."

"Oh, Rosie." Marta covered her face. "I would've given anything to stay, through high school at least."

"I could give you books."

"I've no time now. Papa's seen to that." Marta stared off at the cloud-shrouded mountains that stood like prison walls. Her father intended to keep her captive. She was stronger and healthier than Mama. She could learn faster than Hermann or Elise. Hermann would go off to university. Elise would marry. Marta would be kept at home. After all, someone would have to do the work when Mama couldn't.

"I have to go home. I need to help Mama."

As they walked down the hill, Rosie took Marta's hand. "Maybe when Hermann makes it into high school, your father will allow you to come back to school."

"Hermann will fail again. He has no head for books." At least, the next time, Papa would not be able to blame her.

———— A NOTE ————
FROM THE AUTHOR

Dear Reader,

Since I became a Christian, my stories have begun with struggles I'm having in my own faith walk, or issues that I haven't worked out. That's how this two-book series started. I wanted to explore what caused the rift between my grandma and my mom during the last years of my grandmother's life. Was it a simple misunderstanding that they never had time to work out? Or something deeper that had grown over the years?

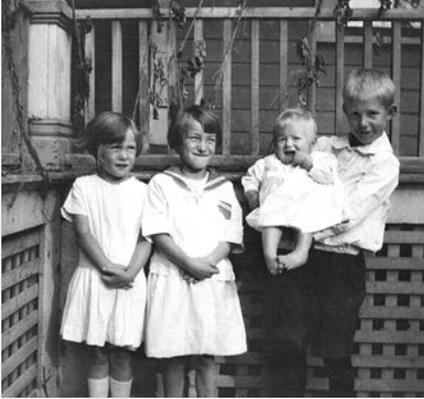
Many of the events of this story were inspired by family history that I researched and events I read about in my mother's journals or experienced in my own life. For instance, when I was three, my mother had tuberculosis, just like Hildie did. Dad brought her home from the

sanatorium and Grandma Wulff came to live with us and help out. It was difficult for everyone. A child doesn't understand communicable disease. For a long time, I didn't think my mother loved me. She never held or kissed me. She kept her distance to protect her children, but it took years before I understood what felt like rejection was actually evidence of sacrificial love.



Steffisburg, Switzerland

While thinking over the past, my husband, Rick, and I decided to take a trip to Switzerland, my grandmother's homeland. Several years earlier, we had gone on a heritage trip to Sweden to meet many of Rick's relatives on his mother's side. I knew I wouldn't have the same opportunity in Switzerland, but wanted to see the countryside with which my grandmother would have been familiar. We visited Bern, where my grandmother went to housekeeping school, and Interlaken, where she worked in a hotel restaurant. When I mentioned to the tour guide that my grandmother had come from the small town of Steffisburg near Thun, she and the bus driver decided to surprise us. Taking an alternate route, they drove into Steffisburg and parked across the street from the centuries-old Lutheran church my grandmother's family must have attended. Rick and I stood in front of the



The Wulff siblings

Steffisburg map for a picture before wandering the church grounds and sitting in the sanctuary. We walked up and down the main street, taking lots of pictures. It was a very precious moment for me. On the way out of town, we caught a glimpse of Thun Castle, another place my grandmother mentioned.

Going through family pictures, I came across several of my mom and her siblings. The one above is my favorite. Mom is second from the left, giggling. Sig was the eldest, then came Mom, Margaret, and Elsie. The picture was taken on the farm in the Central Valley where Grandma and Grandpa had almond trees and grapevines. They dried grapes to make raisins. When my brother and I were young, we often spent a few weeks every summer on the farm, romping and playing and swimming in the irrigation ditches that ran along the back side of the property.

Mom went away to Fresno for nurses' training, then worked at Alta Bates Hospital in Berkeley. My father worked part-time as an orderly. He told me with some amusement that he would go to Mom's ward and ask for an aspirin. Nurses were not to date orderlies, but Dad eventually won Mom over. Not long after they were married,



Francine's parents, the Kings



King family vacation; "Marta" on right

he was called off to war and served as a medic in the European theater. He was in the third wave into Normandy and fought in Germany during the final days of World War II.

My parents enjoyed camping and wanted my brother and me to see as much of our country as possible. Every year, they saved vacation time and took us off on a trip to visit as many national parks as they could squeeze into two weeks. They often invited Grandma Wulff to come along. When my brother and I would doze in the backseat, Grandma or Mom would prod us. "Wake up, sleepyhead. Look out the window! You may never see this part of the country again." Every few years, we made the trip from Pleasanton, California, back to Colorado Springs, my father's hometown, to visit Grandma and Grandpa King. The photo above is one of the rare pictures of my family with both of my grandmothers. Unfortunately, Grandma King died when I was six.

I am blessed to have many wonderful family memories, many of which include Grandma Wulff. I knew there were times of stress and tension between my parents and Grandma, but all families have them. Most work through them. Sometimes minor disagreements can escalate when things aren't resolved.

No one but God can see into the human heart. We can't even fully see into our own. My mother and my grandmother were both strong Christians. They both served others all their lives. Both were admirable women of strong character whom I loved dearly. I still love them and miss them both. I choose to believe my grandmother forgave my mom at the end for whatever hurt lay between them. I choose to believe she simply did not have the time or voice to say it. I know my mother loved her to the end of her own life.

This book has been a three-year quest to feel at peace about the hurt between Mom and Grandma, the possible causes, the ways they might have misunderstood one another, how they might have been reconciled. Jesus teaches us to love one another, but sometimes love doesn't come packed the way we want. Sometimes fear has to be set aside so we can share the past hurts that have shaped our lives, so we can dwell in freedom with one another. And sometimes we don't recognize love when it is offered.

Someday when I pass from this life to the next, I hope Mom and Grandma will both be standing with Jesus and welcoming me home—just as I will be waiting when my own beloved daughter arrives—and her daughter after her and all the generations yet to come.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Francine Rivers". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned in the lower right quadrant of the page.