



The Bridge

Rebecca Rogers Maher

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Henry meets Christa on the west tower of the Brooklyn Bridge, just as they're both about to jump off and kill themselves. Despite his paralyzing depression—and her panic over a second bout of cancer—they can't go through with their plans knowing that the other is going to die. So they make a pact—they'll stay alive for 24 hours, and try to convince each other to live.

From the Staten Island Ferry to Chinatown to the Museum of Modern Art—Henry and Christa embark on a New York City odyssey that exposes the darkest moments of their lives. Is it too late for them? Or will love give them the courage to face the terrifying possibility of hope?

The Bridge Details

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From Reader Review *The Bridge* for online ebook

Sarah S says

What. The suicide, the cancer, but the bit at the end? I mean good Chekhov's gun, but wow? Little much.

Marlene says

Originally published at Reading Reality

Two people who have decided that life has thrown more at them than they can handle meet in the most unlikely of places--in the middle of the night, at the top of the Brooklyn Bridge, screwing their respective courage to the sticking point in preparation to jumping off.

Both Christa and Henry have decided to commit suicide. But neither planned on a witness. Discovering each other, nervous and shaking in the darkness, pulls them each out of the pit. At least for one night. Individually, they are willing to make the leap, but they think the other should be saved.

They make a pact, they'll spend 24 hours together; alive. They can always come back.

But for 24 hours, they give each other one perfect day. Three places each that are fun, or meaningful, or merely distracting. Each plans to give the other a reason for living, even though each plans that they will be the one back on the bridge the next night.

Henry has been consumed by clinical depression for more than a decade. Christa has just received the diagnosis that her breast cancer has returned, even though she bears the physical and emotional scars from her first mastectomy.

Neither has been willing to burden friends or family with the weight of caring for or about them. They are both afraid to reach out.

But it's just one day. Until it's nearly cut short, and they both realize how precious a day can be.

Escape Rating B+: This is short and sweet and incredibly sappy. I will confess that I did not expect to like it at all. But once I got started I couldn't put the damn thing down.

The story alternates between Christa's point of view and Henry's. Also it literally counts down the hours in their 24 hours. It made it easy to count down the day, but the change in perspective (and voice) was a teensy bit jarring, even though the idea was to allow readers to get inside the characters' heads, since that's what brought them to the bridge in the first place.

Christa's situation was way easier to understand than Henry's. I appreciate the attempt to explore what that level of total depression feels like, but the author didn't quite manage to do it for me. I felt more for Christa.

The way the story resolved, well, I was hoping for a reason that they decided to fight for togetherness (Christa's cancer precludes happy ever after). But the mechanism that broke the deadlock was slightly deus

ex machina.

The Bridge is still a terrific three-hankie special. If you enjoy slightly weepy happy endings, you'll love this one.

Mandi Schreiner says

This is a very powerful novella about two strangers who meet in the middle of the night on the Brooklyn Bridge, both about to commit suicide. Yet they can't let the other jump. So they decide to give each other 24 hours. They both set out to convince the other not to do it - and these 24 hours are so well written by the author. I'm so impressed.

Full review coming.

Kim Reads (Read Your Writes Book Reviews) says

Reviewed by Kim
for Read Your Writes Book Reviews

Rebecca is like no author I've ever read. Her stories are dark and thought provoking. At times emotional, requiring you to look at yourself and your life. Her female characters are strong, brash, take no prisoners, tell it like it is kind of ladies. They have mouths that would make sailors blush.

THE BRIDGE is a dark story about two people finding each other amongst the billions and billions of people in the world, on their worst imaginable day. The day they each plan to commit suicide.

Henry is thirty-years-old and by outward appearances has it all. He's model gorgeous and wears expensive clothes. Christa is a woman in her mid-thirties, who also by outward appearances has everything she needs. But these two are hiding something from the world. Henry is clinically depressed and has been for years. Christa is a breast cancer survivor and has just discovered a new lump. For these two, the only way they see out of the pain they're in is to kill themselves.

THE BRIDGE is told from the viewpoints of Henry and Christa over a 24 hour period. The story starts out at 4am on a cool New York City Saturday morning. With the Brooklyn Bridge as the location that will change the lives of Henry and Christa forever. At 4:40 am, Henry finally climbs his way to the Brooklyn Bridge Tower, only to see a woman sitting on the edge. Henry's first reaction is that he can't let this woman jump off the bridge. Christa has the same reaction to Henry. The two start talking and come to an agreement. They will spend the day with each other, taking in the city, trying to convince the other that their life is worth living. Come Sunday morning, they will each go their separate ways, hoping they succeed in saving the other's life. Each knows that their mind is made up. Their goal now on this Saturday isn't to end their life, but try to save the life of a stranger they believe has so much to offer.

This is the story of two people letting down their emotional walls for a complete stranger. Unknowingly, allowing themselves to be free for just one day in their lives. Through their own internal battles and battles with each other they find the one person they can be real with and don't even realize it. Life can end in an

instant so the question becomes, "Do I want to stay in this world and fight? Or do I still want to end my existence?".

This is truly one of my FAVORITE Rebecca Rogers Maher books.

Rating: 4.5

Source: Author

Bipin says

A promising premise. That is not new to me, but I was happy with how I felt while reading the book. Even though the ending is predictable, I was a bit intrigued how the author was going to achieve that.

Good points: revealing the background stories slowly throughout the story, slow buildup of romance. The erotic scenes were both sensual and touch and go fashion, not going into immense details. The climax was unpredictable for me, although there was a small hint somewhere earlier.

The author could've done a better job of exploring the 'why' part (why the characters are doing what they are doing?) rather than have the characters repeatedly say the same thing over and over to make it seem okay. There was a tiny bit of stereotyping (rich and handsome hero) which the story would've fared the same without.

Moral of the story: Everyone of us have our own problems, but all we need is some love and someone to love.

Katie says

This is a similar concept to a book I love, *A Long Way Down* by Nick Hornby, but in this case, there are only two suicidal people, and the tone is less funny and more dark and sincere. It easily could have become too much of either of those things, but it ends up striking a nice balance, finding hope in the characters' connection without denying the serious reality of their lives.

Karen says

I have been searching for a swoon worthy romance to read for MONTHS. One that would make my heart beat faster and make me hold my breath in anticipation. Who would have thought that I would find it in a story about two desperately sad and lonely people about to commit suicide?

For a novella that is just under 100 pages, *The Bridge* has a depth of emotion and development that some full length novels never attain.

Henry and Christa both decide that life just isn't worth living anymore and stumble upon each other on the Brooklyn Bridge the morning they decide to jump. It's a complication neither anticipated and for some reason they can't seem to let the other go through with the act even though they just met.

They agree to give each other 24 hours, exploring New York City, to see if they can convince the other to change their mind.

What was interesting to me is that both Henry and Christa understand the bone deep despair that would drive a person to want to kill themselves. Henry suffers from depression & Christa has a recurring case of breast cancer, but they aren't very understanding of each others reasons.

Christa sees a good looking, wealthy man, with access to help and a future of endless possibilities while Henry sees Christa as a vibrant woman who has the strength to overcome any obstacle in her path.

As they spend the day doing mundane things like eating ice cream, walking around Chinatown and the museum for the last time (they both still plan to kill themselves the next day) they tear down the walls that have held in years of emotions. But letting in all those feelings doesn't necessarily make life easier. With the new emotions comes an even bigger chance of being hurt by a world that has already dealt them blow after blow. The decision to choose life is even more frightening than choosing death to them.

Maher does an incredible job addressing both cancer and depression in an honest way. Again - I'm stunned at what she was able to convey in 79 pages.

Final thoughts: The Bridge is a breathtaking story that's a love letter to NYC, a heartbreaking romance and journey of self discovery and bravery. There are no easy answers here and you'll be biting your nails until the very end. I actually slowed my reading down so it would last longer. Do I wish it was longer? As with almost all novellas - yes but this was damn near perfection for me and will make it as one of my top reads for 2013.

Jessica says

3.5/5 Would have been much more powerful if the ending had been different.

Fable says

Just loved this! It had the perfect amount of everything. The romance was sweet and surprisingly hot and it also got into some deep stuff (seeing as the book was about 2 people about to commit suicide, this was expected). Definitely recommend for a short afternoon read that will stay with you for a while.

Rossy says

Henry and Christa, two people on the verge of suicide who happen to meet at the bridge where they plan to jump off. Depression. Cancer. Love story? Hope?

This book touched me deeply, and I would have given it 5 stars if it wasn't for the ending, that extra ~thing~ at the end messed it up a little.

Still, an overwhelming story!

Amanda (Hootie) Clark says

I feel like an asshole!! I forgot to post my review after I read this!! I loved this book so much, review below

Wow. Suicide is such a taboo topic Nobody wants to really look too closely at it. I don't really know what drew me to this book. I think it was morbid curiosity to see if the author could turn around such a heavy topic and make a romance believable out of it. What I found was something so deep and profound rolled into a tragic and absolutely beautiful story. I honestly don't want to say too much for fear of ruining this book you should definitely experience on your own.

The Bridge is the story of Christa and Henry and how they met on top of the Brooklyn Bridge where they had both intended to end their lives. They both have deep issues many of us can relate to. Christa just found out she has cancer again after losing one breast already and Henry can't live inside his own skin and basically hates himself due to crippling depression. Neither one expected to see the other that morning and a connection between the two causes them to postpone their plans to try and save the other one. They agree to each pick out three things they want the other one to do before they make the final decision. Over a 24 hour period they each discover things about themselves and life in general they never thought to see before. I have to say I was blown away by this short but amazing story. I love stories where people meet by chance and let fate take the helm but I've never seen such daunting circumstances the couple had to face such as suicide. I fell in love with Henry and Christa little by little and I loved watching them try to save the other. Christa was so tough and had lived through so much it was hard to understand how she could just give up on everything. Granted she had a laundry list of reasons there was just so much life in her you could tell how spunky she was. Henry's situation broke my heart. I can't imagine what it's like to live with such a heavy weight as depression on a daily basis. He grew up with a wealthy family and had loving parents but his internal battle is winning until he meets Christa. It's times like this where things turn around and people come into your life when you least expect it and honestly when you don't want it. I was really glad they agreed to postpone their attempts because a lot can happen within a day and as the author proves by the end of this book life changing events take place that left me speechless. They were so jaded by life and never expected to find what they were looking for in the other person. I loved how the author didn't make it solely about them saving each other. They both had to dig deep within themselves and find the reservoir of strength needed to save themselves.

Despite the heavy material and issues the characters went through I really loved this book. It was emotional, romantic and heart warming all in one. The romance itself was believable and the connection between Henry and Christa was very palpable. I found myself rooting so hard for them both throughout. The main thing I enjoyed about this book was that the author didn't wrap everything up nice and neat with a pretty pink bow. She leaves you satisfied but at the same time leaves you to interpret what happens next. It was very realistic and exactly what I would expect from such damaged characters. This book was definitely one I won't forget in the near future and I have to say I would read it again in heartbeat. If you like quick reads and emotionally flawed characters you should really give "*The Bridge*" a try.

Jean says

Short story about Henry and Christa, two people on the verge of ending their lives.....desperation and depression sinking into them and leaving them hopeless and resigned to the fact that there is nothing left

worth living for.

Things happen for a reason....and when these two meet at the top of the Brooklyn Bridge, I believe it was pure fate. They were put there for a reason.....not only to save each other....but to save themselves.

Good story, but would have liked more to see what happens with their lives. Although, I really did love the last few lines of this book.....very well written. 3.5*

Andrea says

If someone tried to convince me that this story of two people who intend to commit suicide—a story that not only discusses suicide but also examines the debilitating effect of severe depression—was not only not depressing, but was actually...uplifting? I would not have believed. The Bridge is a unique and thoughtful look at a day—the last day—for Christa and Henry, both intent on ending their lives at the Brooklyn Bridge. Henry has a long history of severe depression and suicidal thoughts, even has a failed attempt in his past. Christa is facing the recurrence of breast cancer. He can't face another day bearing the pain of the cruelty he sees in the world. She doesn't want to again face treatments, the debilitating illness that comes with them, alone. Why put off the inevitable when the cancer will only kill her in the end?

But Christa and Henry both believe the other has a reason to live. In Henry, Christa sees a man who has opportunities, a family who will mourn him despite what he believes. Henry sees Christa and doesn't see a terminal diagnosis, but another challenge she can endure if she has the courage. Despite their best efforts, in an effort to save the other, Christa and Henry actually have the opportunity to save each other. The two take an entire day to convince the other to make a different choice. They experience quiet, beautiful moments in a garden, witnessing kindness on a city bus, eating ice cream, looking at art. Along the way, the two become invested in each other's outcome. Can they find the will to face a future? Could they possibly do it together?

The Bridge is a story that I could see myself running away from. Depression has had a second-hand effect on my life. To see someone struggle when you can't fully understand the despair, when you want to shout "Snap out of it!" is a truly powerless feeling. And cancer, the cruelest word I know. So many people I've cared for has been lost to it, and very recently I've had to face it with my dad, again. But despite my fears, The Bridge didn't actually crush me. It is a story about finding the beautiful moments, finding the will to keep moving forward. That is life affirming.

The Bridge is an intense story, very thought-provoking, and surprisingly romantic. I'm sure it is a story that will stay in my mind and in my heart.

Favorite Quotes

And Henry. Lying beside me with his eyes closed, breathing. Would it be bad if I climbed into the crook of his arm to sleep?

I try it, and he doesn't push me away. Instead he turns his face toward me, and presses his mouth against my hair. I feel the intake of his breath, the soft exhalation. His arm around me is warm and sure, and his heart beats strong, strong. I don't want to feel the stirring in my body in the places his body touches mine. I don't want to feel the heat of him beside me, or to crave that heat. To want to burrow inside it and look for sustenance there.

*I try not to think about tomorrow. About where he'll be. Where I'll be.
I was so certain this morning. So completely sure. And now?
I don't know. I don't know.*

Alexis Hall says

I reviewed this forever ago for H&H:

People have been recommending me Rebecca Rogers Maher's *The Bridge* for a while now because of the Depression thing. Which is sort of the equivalent of someone coming up to you and being all like “hey, dude, I heard you were scared of spiders, d’you wanna meet Hairy, he’s my pet tarantula.”

Except it’s more complicated than that.

I suppose it would be like being introduced to Hairy, and having a fluctuating chance of being wildly arachnophobic. I sometimes like to read books about Depression. And sometimes I’d rather stuff glass in my eyes.

But I was feeling brave and non-arachnophobic this Xmas. So I met Hairy, and I feel both enriched and frustrated and saddened and deeply touched by the experience. This review/article/post will contain significant spoilers for Hairy.

I’ve been reading romance long enough that I’ve developed tastes. I like rich, sprawling, wickedly subversive historicals, liminal, dark-ish contemporaries that don’t make promises about forever, and m/m that isn’t full of fisting, rape, and enemas. Therefore Rebecca Rogers Maher’s *The Bridge* is pretty much my perfect romance. It takes place in New York over a 24 hour period. A depressive and a cancer patient meet on by chance Brooklyn Bridge, having independently decided to kill themselves. The narrative revolves around their attempts to convince one another that they have something worth living for.

That’s, uh, a pretty edgy premise. And, honestly, while it’s not a gratuitously bleak read, it’s certainly a difficult one. I was basically on teary, anxious High Feelz Alert throughout, not sure whether I was going to be able to read, but at the same too scared to stop. Yes, you know it’s a romance so there’s the promise of at least a HFN ahead of you, but it’s hard to see (and therefore trust) how you’re going to get there. It’s not a happenings book—they walk, they talk, they eat fudge—but the emotional tension is nearly unbearable. The juxtaposition of their self-imposed time limit (twenty four hours to decide to stay alive) and the reality of their suffering creates this impossible knife-edge of hope and despair: you understand them, you grieve for their pain, and you desperately, desperately want them find some kind of peace that isn’t death.

There’s such a lot about this book that speaks to me and intrigues me, which is pretty extraordinary considering it weighs in at under a hundred pages. In many ways it’s a very straightforward romance set up—Henry is rich, gorgeous and successful, Christa is feisty and blunt and from the wrong side of the tracks—except he’s depressed and she has breast cancer and they both want to die. While they have lived entirely different lives (hers of fierce survival, his of privileged continuance), this isn’t really an opposite-attracts scenario. I feel a bit of a doofus pointing at the title of the book going, oh but it’s called *The Bridge*, d’you see, d’you see but, significantly, this is a story about connections.

What brings Henry and Christa together, the thing they instinctively understand about each other, is

suffering. As the book begins they're convinced pain is what separates them from other people. By the end it is what binds them together, and to the world. I guess that doesn't sound particularly romantic, but—to be honest—this isn't really a romantic book. It's too raw, too desperate, in places too ugly. But what it is, is powerful and true. A story about the smallness and the hugeness of things, and the endless human capacity for compassion and hope even when it feels like everything is over.

You can read the rest of my thoughts here.

Jackie says

There's meet cute, and then there's meet awful. Climbing the tower of the Brooklyn Bridge in order to commit suicide, Henry, who has been plagued by an "ill-wired brain" for most of his life, discovers he's not the only one intending to end his life. Christa, already having lost one breast to cancer, is determined not to suffer through the pain of another bout when she discovers another "IED" has invaded her remaining breast. Christa, a waitress, recognizes that the handsome, entitled man pulling her back from the edge would never have given her the time of day in other circumstances ("I guess attempted suicide is a great leveler of social boundaries"), yet can't resist hopping on the rescue horse yet again, even though all of her previous attempts to help people she cares for have been complete disasters. Each determined to save the other, but still committed to their own ends, the two agree to spend one day together, hoping that the other will find helping someone else, playing the hero if only for a day, will convince the other that he or she has something worth living for.

It's a bit of a shame that I read Maher's novella right after I finished *Glitterland*. Both delve into the challenges of romance for those dealing with depression, but since *GLITTERLAND* does it at novel-length, it has more room to depict the details of living with mental illness, making Maher's treatment feel underdeveloped. Both Henry and Christa are well-drawn, and I found their gradual coming together persuasive, and enjoyed their day wandering NYC (shades of *Where She Went*). The climax of the book, though, feels rather contrived and abrupt, not quite earned.
