

the
Ballantyne
LEGACY 2

Love's
AWAKENING

A N O V E L

L A U R A
F R A N T Z


Revell

a division of Baker Publishing Group
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Laura Frantz, *Love's Awakening*
Revell Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group, © 2013. Used by permission.

© 2013 by Laura Frantz

Published by Revell
a division of Baker Publishing Group
P.O. Box 6287, Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6287
www.revellbooks.com

Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—for example, electronic, photocopy, recording—without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Frantz, Laura.

Love's awakening : a novel / Laura Frantz.

pages cm. — (The Ballantyne legacy ; Book 2)

ISBN 978-0-8007-2042-1 (paper)

1. Families—Pennsylvania—Fiction. 2. Domestic fiction. I. Title.

PS3606.R4226L65 2013

813'.6—dc23

2013015726

Scripture quotations are from the King James Version of the Bible.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

Published in association with Books & Such Literary Agency, 52 Mission Circle, Suite 122, PMB 170, Santa Rosa, CA 95409-7953.

13 14 15 16 17 18 19 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Laura Frantz, *Love's Awakening*
Revell Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group, © 2013. Used by permission.

To my beloved grandmother,
Catherine Fay Cleek Feagan



They that trust in the LORD shall be as
Mount Zion,
which cannot be removed, but abideth
for ever.

PSALM 125:1

Who clings to God in constant trust
As Zion's mount he stands full just,
And who moves not, nor yet does reel,
But stands forever strong as steel!

PSALM 125:1,
OLD SCOTTISH VERSION

Prologue

*Beauty and folly are old
companions.*

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

OCTOBER 1793

“You’ve a visitor, sir. Just wanted to warn ye.” The young apprentice at the office door stood in the glare of autumn sunlight, the brilliant blue Monongahela waterfront behind him.

Silas Ballantyne thanked him and looked out the door he’d left open to see a woman stepping carefully around cordage . . . and seeming to court the stares of every boatman in her wake. What was it about Elspeth Lee that made even a lad of twelve take notice and feel a bite of warning? Silas could hardly believe it was she. He’d not seen her in years. And now the bitter past came rushing back with a vengeance, dredging up unwelcome emotions.

She stepped into his office without invitation and looked about with appraising blue eyes, her beauty undimmed by the passage of time. He gave no greeting. The tension swirled thick as the sawdust in the boatyard beyond the open door.

“Well, Silas,” she finally said, lifting her chin and meeting his grudging gaze. “I’ve come to see my sister and wish her well.”

Wish her well?

He felt a sweeping relief that he’d not wed this woman. The sweetness he’d experienced with Eden couldn’t be measured. Those sultry days following their July wedding had been the happiest he’d ever known. He’d not even gone to the boatyard at first. They’d kept to the bridal suite at the Black Bear Hotel, as if to make up for all the time they’d been apart, emerging only for meals or to ride out to New Hope. The house was half finished now and would be done by the time Eden delivered their first child in April. But he wouldn’t tell Elspeth that.

“Eden is indisposed.” The words were clipped, curtailing conversation.

Her eyes flared. “Indisposed?”

He didn’t mean ill, he meant unwilling—yet she seized on the other. “My, Silas, you’re hard on a wife. ’Tis glad I am that I didn’t become Mistress Ballantyne.” She looked about as if getting her bearings. “I suppose I shall bide my time here in Pittsburgh till she recovers and can have visitors—”

“Nae. You’ll be on your way.”

She assumed a surprised petulance, eyes sliding back to him. “That’s hardly the welcome I expected from my new brother-in-law.”

“You’ll get no greeting from me now or in future. But I’ll gladly pay your return passage back to York on the next stage.” He took a slow breath. “And if there’s any harm done Eden between now and then, any loss to my property or business, I won’t bother bringing you before the Allegheny Court. You’ll answer to me.”

Though carefully stated, the words held a telling edge, sharp as the dirk that lined his boot. He had enemies aplenty

in Pittsburgh, namely the Turlock clan. He wouldn't be adding to their numbers with this woman. But his most pressing concern was Eden, already aglow with the babe inside her, the harm done her in York a fading memory.

"I'll have my head shipwright escort you off the premises—and I'll make sure I'm present to see you leave Pittsburgh on the first stage tomorrow. Now if you'll excuse me, I have work to do."

Back stiff, she stood on his threshold, malice hardening her every feature. "I'll be back, Silas Ballantyne. You can't keep me away from Eden—or Pittsburgh—perpetually."

Their eyes locked, but hers were the first to falter when he said, "Say what you will. I'll not welcome you. Ever."

1

*The city of Philadelphia is perhaps
one of the wonders of the world.*

LORD ADAM GORDON

ALLEGHENY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
APRIL 1822

*Elinor Louise Ballantyne is an agreeable
young lady with a fortune upward of twenty
thousand pounds . . .*

Nearly wincing at the words, Ellie fisted the latest bulletin from the Matrimonial Society of Philadelphia, hiding the paper beneath the generous folds of her pelisse. The kersey-mere fabric was too warm for an April day that had begun in an overstuffed coach and was now stalled on the Pennsylvania turnpike to Pittsburgh, but she'd chosen the nondescript garment for a purpose.

She *was* an agreeable young lady.

She *was* traveling alone.

And she *was* indeed worth a fortune.

These three things were a tempting combination on any day, but here in the wilds of western Pennsylvania, they were potentially lethal. Hadn't she just seen a handbill warning of highwaymen at the last stage stop?

Emerging from the coach, she stood in a patch of sunlight slightly apart from the other passengers and tried to ignore the oaths coming from beneath the vehicle as the driver dealt with a broken axel. The other passengers looked on in consternation, some muttering epithets of their own.

"Miss . . . ?" The inquiry came from a robust, heavily rouged woman to Ellie's left, her hazel eyes appraising.

"Elinor," she replied with a hint of a smile, clutching her purse a bit tighter.

"Care to walk with us? We might well make it to Pitt ahead of the driver. It ain't but a dozen miles away, so the marker there says."

Relieved, Ellie glanced at the stone pillar alongside the road before falling into step with the others. A little walk would hardly hurt, given she'd been cooped up in a coach for days on end. Her travel mates had boarded just twenty miles prior, far fresher than she but just as anxious to see the smoky valley that was Pittsburgh, its three rivers entwining in a silvery knot.

They'd walked but a mile when the sky cast off its blueness like a discarded dress and clad itself in shades of Quaker gray. At the first stinging drops of rain, Ellie quickened her steps, the thin soles of her London-made slippers padding along in dusty protest. Merely a *gandiegow*, her Scots father would say. A heavy shower.

Or . . . worse?

Worse.

Hail big as goose eggs began pelting down, giving rise to grunts and cries as all ran for the cover of the woods.

Thankful for the broad brim of her bonnet, Ellie huddled beneath a sturdy oak and fixed her eye on the western rim of the horizon. There a funnel cloud was whirling, black as pitch and sounding strangely like a waterfall. Grabbing hold of the tree's rough trunk, she squeezed her eyes shut against the swirling debris, the scent of damp spring earth suffocating. Twice the storm nearly upended her, prying her fingers free from their fierce hold. She felt fragile as a butterfly about to be shorn of its wings, certain the tempest would tear her to pieces.

Lord, help me get home . . .

When the whirlwind finally departed, sheets of cold rain took its place, soaking the mass of her waist-length hair now matted with twigs and leaves. Nary a hairpin remained, to say nothing of her bonnet.

The road was oozing with coffee-colored mud and downed trees. Through the haze she could make out a few of her traveling companions ahead, scrambling for a light in the distance. It beckoned like a star, promising shelter and peace.

The Widow Meyer's? The last stage stop just shy of Pittsburgh?

When she stumbled toward its broad wooden steps, she found the yard as littered as the road, full of stranded coaches and damaged wagons and hysterical horses, its cavernous public room just as chaotic. Night was falling fast.

What a strange world a tavern was!

Standing on the threshold, she could almost believe she'd left Philadelphia for good. No more Madame Moreau. No tedious lessons in French or embroidery. No performing harp solos in stifling assemblies or declining dances at society balls. And most importantly, no more being hounded by the Matrimonial Society of Philadelphia.

Her reticule was gone, pickpocketed by the wind, just like

her bonnet. No coin. No comb. No proof of who she was. The realization edged her nearer the hysteria rising all around her. Looking up, she noticed the western portion of the tavern roof was missing, shingles agape. Rain was pouring in like water through a sieve, drenching a far corner and sending people scurrying.

“The storm of the century!” someone shouted amidst the din, raising the sodden hair on the back of her neck.

Hot and cold by turns, she unfastened the braid trim along her collar, shrugged off her pelisse, and draped it over one arm, mindful that one too many men were watching. Unbidden, a memory crawled through her benumbed conscience and turned her more wary. Something had happened to her mother in a tavern long ago, the murky details never broached. What she most remembered was her father’s aversion to such places and his insistence she stay clear of them.

Oh, Father, if you could see me now . . .



Toward dawn, Jack Turlock and a collection of the most able-bodied men finished clearing a three-mile path from the tavern toward Pittsburgh. The storm had touched down slightly west of Widow Meyer’s before blazing a new trail east and inflicting the most damage. By lantern light they worked, thankful the rain and wind had abated, all relieved to see the sun creep over the far horizon in reassurance the world had not ended after all.

He moved slowly, the heavy canvas of his trousers mud-mired to the thigh, his boots soiled beyond repair. He’d misplaced his coat in the melee, and his grimy shirt had snuck past his waistband and now ended at his knee. Rubbing the crick in his neck, he remembered his cravat was adorning someone’s broken arm as a sling. It had been a very long night.

A gentle wind was stirring all around him after a dead calm, reminding him of his near escape the night before. In the thick of the storm, a falling oak, broad as three men, missed him by mere inches. The crashing thud of it echoed long in his thoughts, and on its heels was the voice of his former schoolmaster.

Pulvis et umbra sumus. We are dust and shadows.

He tried to shake off the memory, but the tempest inside him lingered, of far greater fury than the storm now bearing east. He ducked beneath the low lintel of the tavern's main entrance, and a hush ensued. At the mud-spattered sight of him? Or his family's reputation? Likely the latter. In the keeping room of this very tavern was cask after cask of Turlock whiskey.

He entered warily, the stench of spirits and unwashed bodies colliding in a sickening rush. Slightly light-headed from hunger, he began assembling women and children, keeping families intact for travel. A few genteel ladies murmured in complaint at being made to wait, but he gave them no notice other than a cursory reassurance they'd not linger long. The room had emptied by half now, and he could better assess the situation.

"Mr. Turlock, sir, ain't like ye to tarry." The stable boy at his elbow shifted from one bare foot to the other, looking befuddled beneath his many freckles. "What d'ye want me to do with Cicero?"

"See that he gets an extra nosebag of oats." He pulled a coin from his pocket and flipped it into the air, and the lad caught it with a grin. "I hope to leave come morning."

Truly, he rarely overstayed his welcome, his restless nature never settling. He only needed a tankard of ale. A meal. Maybe a bath. Aye, that was a necessity. His mother tolerated no mess at Broad Oak, nor did her housekeeper. Glad he was that he had a change of clothes in his saddlebags.

It was twilight when the last of the wagons and coaches pulled away and he arranged for a room. Only a few men and a handful of women remained, eating and making low conversation at the surrounding tables. As he stood by the counter, sipping from his tankard, his attention was drawn repeatedly to a corner cast in shadows. Had he overlooked someone?

A young woman sat alone, back to the wall. He'd noticed her earlier helping with the children and assumed she was part of a family. He drew closer, breathing past the tightness crowding his chest.

Aye, he'd overlooked someone. But he couldn't believe it was she.



Although Ellie had kept her eye on Jack Turlock if only to stay clear of him since he'd first set foot in the tavern, she now looked away. Toward the gaping kitchen door where roast goose and apple tansy and bread she had no coin for mingled with the smell of pipe smoke and spirits. Folding her hands in her lap, she sat as erectly as she could despite spending the previous night in a chair, her backside as stiff as the splintered wood.

Mercy, it couldn't get any worse, her sister Andra was wont to say.

But yes it could, and he was coming straight for her.

She'd not seen Jack Turlock in years. Last she heard he was touring Europe, taking inventory of distilleries in Scotland, Ireland, and France, or so the papers said. In that time she'd almost forgotten all about him. Clad in mourning garb due to his grandfather's passing, he'd cut a sober if striking figure on the streets of Pittsburgh. As the younger son and not the heir, he wasn't nearly as interesting as his brother, Wade, at least to meddling society matrons.

As he walked her way, their many childhood encounters came rushing over her like the rivers at flood stage. She felt like a little girl again, about to be struck with a stone or at least belittled by his terse tongue. They'd often faced off at the creek dividing Turlock and Ballantyne land back then, her brothers Ansel and Peyton the same age as Jack and Wade. Sometimes Andra had been there, and Daniel Cameron. As the youngest, Ellie had escaped most of their wrangling. The look on his face assured her she'd not escape now.

He stared down at her, his low voice skipping any pleasantries. "Why didn't you tell me you were here? I'd have put you on the first wagon."

"There was no need. I'm not injured." Her gaze fell to her lap.

I'm simply a bedraggled mess, without coin or comb.

As badly as she wanted to be home, she did not wish to be singled out. This preferential treatment was what she was running from. Besides, Rose usually handled all the details for travel. Without her maid's plucky presence, Ellie hardly knew what to do.

She raised wary eyes to his, finding him more mud than man, his clothes in tatters. He managed to look bemused . . . somewhat mocking. Leaning into the table, he motioned to a serving girl in a checkered cap and kerchief.

"Tea," he said quietly. "Some bread."

With a smile the girl disappeared, as if taking orders from the inn's owner. But the owner was busy serving Turlock whiskey behind a long, scarred counter hedged with a cage. Business, from the looks of all the thirsty gathering there, was brisk.

"You're in want of a room," he told her. "Then we'll leave in the morning."

"We?" Her mouth formed a perfect O as she said it.

His sharp gaze pinned her so there would be no mistaking his meaning. "You're in need of an escort to take you home—a chaperone."

"I'm in need of a chaperone?" she echoed in disbelief.

To keep me safe from the likes of you.

Humor lit his gray eyes and warmed them the color of pewter, as if he well knew what she was thinking. "I'll return you to New Hope myself, out of respect for your father."

My father? The man who jailed you countless times?

Speechless, she felt a rush of gratitude override her surprise as the requested tea and bread arrived, the latter slathered with butter and honey. Her stomach gave a little lurch of anticipation, but she pushed the plate his way. He'd not said they were hers, so she'd make no assumptions.

With a long, grubby finger, he pushed the plate back toward her, along with the steaming tea. Famished, she bent her head and breathed a quick prayer before biting off a corner of bread, a cascade of crumbs spilling down her wrinkled bodice.

"I can do little about how you look, but I can certainly feed you," he said drily.

She stopped chewing, heat creeping into her cheeks, and remembered her trunk. Had the coachman ever repaired the axle and gotten this far? Or was he still stuck, hemmed in by countless fallen trees—or worse? Concerned for his safety, she nevertheless rued the loss of her belongings. Perhaps she could beg a comb. Some hairpins. Taking a sip of tea, she felt immediately better. Tea was comfort. Tranquility. Civility.

"I can walk home," she said, setting her cup aside and brushing the crumbs from her dress. "'Tis but a few miles more. I don't need an escort."

Quirking an eyebrow, he looked beneath the table at her feet. Ever-practical Jack. Quickly she drew her sodden slippers beneath the muddy hem of her skirt.

“Five miles and you’d be barefoot. Ten and you’d end up begging a ride. There’s a sidesaddle in the stable—or a coach.”

Those were her choices then. Since her riding clothes were in her trunk, she’d have to take a coach. Only she had no coin . . . “My belongings were atop the stage that broke down a few miles east of here. The driver—I trust he’s all right—”

“There’s been no loss of life that we know of, just injuries. But I’ll send someone back that way to be sure.”

Relieved, she confessed, “My pocketbook is missing—lost in the storm.”

“Why aren’t you in Philadelphia?”

She winced at his bold question. Her father would soon ask her the same, only his tone would be more gracious, surely. “I—I’m done with finishing school. ’Tis time I return home.”

“You picked a poor time to do it,” he murmured.

She took another sip of tea, unable to refute this fact, glancing toward the kitchen but snagging on his profile instead. He was looking up at the men repairing the roof, the feeble light framing him as it spilled through. His coloring shocked her, so deeply tanned one would think he was a common laborer and spent all his time outdoors. His features had always been sharply handsome, almost hawkish, his hair the color of summer straw, not whiskey-dark like Wade’s. That he was a worldly man there could be no doubt. He even moved with an ease and agility far removed from the stiff formality of society’s drawing rooms. He was, in a word, different. And dangerous.

Father would not approve.