



the ROSE
and the
THISTLE



LAURA FRANTZ



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The Rose and the Thistle

THE BALLANTYNE LEGACY

Love's Reckoning

Love's Awakening

Love's Fortune



the R O S E
and the
T H I S T L E



A Novel

LAURA FRANTZ


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Dedicated to

Tawny Brown Ramsperger, Sarah Sleet,
and our eighteenth-century Humes of Wedderburn Castle
in the Scottish Borders

Historical Note

In 1707, the two kingdoms of Scotland and England were united, much to the ire of those who supported the Jacobite cause. The Jacobites were supporters of the deposed James II, who reigned from 1685 to 1688, and his descendants in the long-reigning Stuart dynasty. (*Jacobus* was derived from the Latin form of *James*.) His son, James Francis Edward Stuart, attempted to reclaim the throne his father had lost. This resulted in the Rising, or rebellion, in the year 1715, when George I was the reigning monarch of Great Britain.



Laura Frantz, *The Rose and the Thistle*
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Glossary

a-crow: to tell or proclaim

auld: old

Auld Reekie: Edinburgh, on account of its smoke and stench

aywis at the cow's tail: always last, behind, or lagging

barmy: crazy

blether: chat, gossip

braisant: bold

braw: handsome

brose: soup

bumbazed: confused

burn: brook or stream

canna: cannot

close: passageway or courtyard

collieshangie: dispute, uproar, disturbance

clype: gossip, spread tales

crabbit: in a bad temper, out of humor

crankie: unsteady, undependable

crivvens: an exclamation of astonishment or horror

doesna: does not

douce: sweet, pleasant, modest, agreeable

dowie: sad, melancholy

dreich: dreary, cheerless, bleak
dyke: low wall made of stones
endie: selfish, attached to one's own interests
faither: father
fankle: tangle, snare
frichtsomen: fearful, terrifying
guid: good
haar: a cold sea fog
haver: babble, gossip
heidie: headstrong, rebellious
ill-scrappit: abusive, rude, bitter
ill-willy: bad-tempered, mean
isna: is not
jings: exclamation of surprise
kelpie: a water spirit
kirk: church
laird: lord or landowner
limmer: a woman of low morals
lykewake: the watch kept over a deceased person
Merse: a luxuriant part of the Scottish Borders
Michaelmas: a day in May when servants were hired or terminated
nae: no
peely-wally: sickly or wan
sair: sore
sassenach: foreigner
scourie: shabby, poor in appearance
sculduddery: unchaste behavior
selkie: magical creature
shelpit: thin, puny

slippit awa: slipped away

smirr: a fine rain or drizzle

sonsie: engaging or friendly in appearance or manner

tae: to

tapsalteerie: upside down, confused, disordered

trittil-trattil: nonsense, foolishness

ugsome: inspiring fear or dread

unco: unfamiliar, strange

unweel: unwell

vauntie: proud, boastful

weel: well

wheest: exclamation of surprise or chiding

Whitsunday: May 28, one of four Scottish quarter days when contracts could be terminated or renewed and servants could be hired or dismissed

wynd: a narrow lane, street, or alley

yer: your, you're



*We are persons of quality, I assure you, and women of
fashion, and come to see and be seen.*

BEN JONSON

April 1715

Château de Saint-Germain-en-Laye

France

Struck by sunlight, the sprawling château was a blinding, rose-hued white. It reminded Lady Blythe Hedley of home, of her family's Northumbrian castle with its pink harled walls, a pearl in an emerald-green meadow. Tipping her straw hat slightly forward, Blythe glanced up at the royal apartments and terraces on the second floor before turning toward the River Seine and the château's famous gardens.

Her companions walked ahead of her. Were they finally tired of flirting with the officers of the Gardes du Corps who stood watch? Only Lady Catherine Stuart tarried, linking arms with her old friend before continuing down the gravel path, their maids following at a discreet distance.

"How fetching you look in your pale green gown, La Belle Hedley. Akin to a stalk of celery," Catherine teased, knowing Blythe didn't give a fig for fashion and lamented her height, exceeding most of the court's gallants. "And though you may roll your eyes at me for

saying so, there's no doubt you are the best-dressed woman here and have set French society afire."

'Tis not my fashion sense but my mother's reputation that has done so. "I would rather spend it all on books than silks and ribbons," Blythe replied. But her dear father wouldn't let her. The duke was far more matrimonially minded than she. And given she lacked any outward beauty save her garments, fashion was her one asset.

"You are unquestionably a la mode." Catherine openly admired Blythe's flawless coiffure styled into pale coils over one bare shoulder and adorned with beribboned rosettes. "I've heard the Duchess d'Orleans covets your hairdresser while Mary of Modena covets your gems." Her hazel eyes slid to the choker of sapphires around Blythe's throat and the ones set in silver and pearl adorning her ears. "Not paste gems but true brilliants. I suppose they were your mother's. Such a blinding, bewitching blue."

Blythe touched an earring absently. "But how ridiculous I feel in red heels." She looked down at her new slippers in bemusement before reaching into her pocket. With a practiced snap of her wrist, she unfurled a painted fan encrusted with tiny precious stones, a gift from Catherine's aunt, lady of the queen's bedchamber.

Blythe tallied how many days she'd been exiled to—*visiting*—France. Sixty-three?

She and Catherine strolled on with no apparent aim beneath the strengthening spring sun, their hooped, colorful skirts swaying in the breeze. "We've walked these paths for weeks now." The lament in Catherine's tone was telling. "And not one glimpse of my kindred, the ousted prince."

Blythe's gaze swept the manicured grounds as though James Francis Edward Stuart would materialize before their eyes. Charming and highly polished, the would-be James III of England and James VIII of Scotland was the catch of the continent—if he could only regain his crown.

"His Royal Highness remains in Lorraine," Blythe said quietly. Much could be learned by listening, as gossip and intrigue buzzed

at every turn. “He seeks a royal bride. One who is wealthy and polished and—”

“That would be *you*.” Catherine cast her a knowing look.

“Alas, I lack the requisite curves and double chin, plain as I am,” Blythe replied with a flutter of her fan. The foremost courtiers were voluptuous, sensuous women with heavily rouged cheeks and lips, sporting beauty patches in myriad places.

“Ha! Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, is it not?”

“Most men of my acquaintance seem preoccupied with face, form, and fortune, in that order. Yet I long to be loved for myself and nothing else.”

A shadow passed over Catherine’s porcelain-perfect features. “Though you profess to being plain, there is no denying you *are* the Duke of Northumbria’s daughter.”

Blythe squinted as the sun strengthened. Not just his daughter. His only daughter—and only child. The whole weight of the Northumbrian fortune and future was upon her. If she failed to marry, failed to provide an heir . . .

“Alas, a duke’s daughter of scandalous lineage.”

Catherine raised slender shoulders in a shrug. “’Twas long ago and best forgotten.”

“Then needs be I find a man of dim memory and even greater purse than my beloved father.”

“How few nobles fit, including our impoverished if dashing Stuart prince.” Catherine sighed. “I fear we shall all be branded spinsters if we leave France unaffianced.”

“Marriage is not a right, nor is singleness a curse.” Blythe’s fan fluttered harder. “I’ve been pondering other paths, like becoming a nun and joining a convent in Flanders or Chaillot. Perhaps a contemplative order like the English Augustine nuns at Bruges.”

“Don’t you dare!” Catherine gave a vicious pinch to Blythe’s arm as if to bring her to her senses. “You have too much to offer to shut yourself away so.”

Stung but in no mood to argue, Blythe made no reply. They’d

reached the river's parterre with its tall hedge walls that led to the renowned grotto rooms, raising the gooseflesh on her arms. She always felt she entered a magical, otherworldly kingdom amid its rushing fountains, water-spewing dragons, moving statuary, and automated music. Cool as a cave, it was.

Cool as England in the rain.

She paused before a whimsical fountain of twittering birds, their song caused by unseen waterworks that made them spin and trill. Other waterspouts were hidden, sometimes erupting to spray visitors and mimic a tempest, complete with thunder and wind. It wouldn't be the first time Blythe got a soaking, but she wouldn't mind a whit.

"The musicality of this place never fails to delight me," she said.

"I prefer the automaton carriage and company of soldiers," Catherine said, moving on. "Or the musical theater that enacts an opera in five parts."

Blythe lingered by the birds, feeling a trifle homesick for her own pet sparrow at Bellbroke Castle. Was Mrs. Stanhope taking proper care of Pepys?

Ashiver from the grotto's mist, she tapped Catherine's arm with her fan as she overtook her. "The sun suits me better." She raised her skirts and hastened up marble steps over which water cascaded, soaking her gaudy, red-heeled shoes.

Together they moved along to the Grand Terrace as Catherine's younger, giggling sisters joined them, their maids still in pursuit.

When strolling, a lady should be reserved and demure.

Blythe slowed her steps, ever mindful of French etiquette. For all she knew, the exiled dowager queen, Mary of Modena, was peering out the castle windows, wondering why her English guests were in such a hurry. And for what? Multicourse suppers preceded by endless music, games of lansquenet and portique, court balls and royal birthday celebrations, theater, and endless other amusements. Save the servants, one did not do anything resembling work here.

Everything seemed devoted to beauty. The perfumed court was ever abloom with the lushest flowers, the gilded salons perpetually fragrant. Blythe raised her fan and hid a yawn. Though her days were astonishingly full, her mind was empty. She sought solace in the sedate order of morning prayers, private meditations, and daily mass followed by vespers and the recital of the rosary. 'Twas a relief to practice her Catholic faith openly here when it must be hidden in England. Time spent on her knees grew. So much needed praying for.

The English Queen Anne had recently died, and the throne had been usurped by a foreign Hanoverian named George who spoke no English. All hopes for a Stuart restoration seemed at a standstill, as the displaced British court was all too content to linger in France instead of fighting to regain the English throne. Meanwhile, Louis XIV, the long-standing French monarch who financed the exiled Stuarts and royal household, lay ill. Would his successor be as generous in regard to his poor British relations?

"We must not dally," Catherine said, consulting her watch. "Tonight is the ball, remember. And we must look our very best."

They hastened on, intent on the château.

"Mademoiselle." At the door of their apartments stood a liveried footman, a letter clasped in his gloved hands.

"Je vous remercie," Blythe murmured, taking the post and noting the intact seal.

She pocketed it, feeling a dozen eyes upon her. The exiled court was rife with spies and informants. Letters were oft written in codes and ciphers to protect their privacy, though hers to and from her father were hardly worth intercepting. Tepid at best, they were simply the terse musings of a widower and his homesick daughter. Hardly the stuff of secrecy and intrigue.

Once inside their apartment, Blythe closed the door and leaned against it. The foolscap opened with a crisp rustle, and for a time the gilded halls of St. Germaine gave way to the north of England, the beloved landscape of home.

*Bellbroke Castle
Northumberland
6 April 1715*

My dearest daughter,

I pray this finds you in excellent health and spirits. Our Northumbrian hills are now awash with your favorite blue-bells. Bellbroke is hardly the same without you, and even the servants and tenants are asking about you. You will no doubt delight in the fact I have finally heeded your homesickness. The time has come for you to return to England . . .