



# Love's Reckoning

*Laura Frantz*

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## Love's Reckoning Laura Frantz

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In this sweeping family saga set in western Pennsylvania, one man's choices in love and work, in friends and enemies, set the stage for generations to come. *Love's Reckoning* is the first entry in The Ballantyne Legacy, a rich, multi-layered historical quartet from talented writer Laura Frantz, beginning in the late 1700s and following the Ballantyne family through the end of the Civil War.

## Love's Reckoning Details

Date : Published September 1st 2012 by Revell

ISBN :

Author : Laura Frantz

Format : Kindle Edition 433 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Christian Fiction, Romance, Christian, Historical Romance

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# From Reader Review Love's Reckoning for online ebook

## Casey says

I love novels that so completely fill my heart, overflowing story, characters and the romance of love...love of faith in Christ and the romantic love that promises more than just a happy ending for characters I've fallen in love with.

What's the first word we think of when we want to describe a book we've adored? Love. It seems too simple, too cliché a description for when I think of Eden and Silas upon the page.

There is a rhythm, a cadence to their story, the words sweeping me into eighteenth century America. When I started reading their story, I thought the beginning a bit slow, but read much further than one hundred pages and you'll find two well-crafted characters rise from the ashes of their circumstances. Circumstances that made me want to leap through the pages and fight for them together.

The novel takes a heart rending turn almost three quarters of the way through the story and I ached for the time lost in the romance between these two characters. There is a passion to their story, not romantically, but in their faith, in how they live life.

Eden and Silas are larger than life, filling the pages, my mind with glorious word-painted images and my heart with the purity of their romance. My only wish? The novel hadn't ended with their beginning. But I can't wait to see them together again in book two of the Ballantyne Legacy.

This review is my honest opinion. Thanks to the publishers for my copy to review.

**\*\*Available September 2012 from Revell, a division of Baker Publishers\*\***

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## Michelle says

Oh, how I love a Laura Frantz novel! This is her fourth novel, and the first in The Ballantyne Legacy series, which will span over four books, and four generations; an epic family saga, indeed! I only wish we didn't have to wait so long in between books.

Laura has a tremendous talent to craft beautiful novels, and create images in the reader's mind that truly leave a lasting impression. From unique characters, detailed descriptions, high tension moments of uncertainty, to sweet, tender encounters . . . I found myself savoring every word, not only for its depth, but its incredible richness.

Love's Reckoning is not your "run-of-the-mill" novel, and if you're like me, you'll find yourself captivated from beginning to end! And just when you think you know which direction the story is headed . . . you're in for a surprise that perhaps you weren't expecting! That was one of the things I appreciated most about the story . . . it took me places that I never saw coming.

I love how the spiritual thread is beautifully incorporated into the story, as we see Eden "thirst" for God and His word, and see her grow in her knowledge of Him. It's endearing how she keeps His word figuratively, and literally, close to her heart. In addition, I think it's important to note that the novel opens up with Psalm 23. Even through the dark times and trials, Eden and Silas experience comfort, protection, and leading from the great Shepherd. He's there with us, even in those dark valleys, and I love how Laura blends this into the story.

If you're an admirer of historical fiction, and you appreciate great literature, this is one you won't want to miss. It will charm and enchant you, and leave you with great anticipation for the next installment!

**\*\*Thank you to Revell, A Division of Baker Publishing Group, for a review copy, in exchange for my honest opinion.\*\***

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## **Melanie says**

Review on Amazon: <http://www.amazon.com/review/R1VGAS49...>

Review on my blog (to be posted 9/3): <http://christianbookshelfreviews.blog...>

Love's Reckoning is the second book I've read by Laura Frantz and I absolutely loved it! From the beginning on I was enthralled with the story and how things would turn out - I could hardly put it down once I was a couple chapters in (although I had to in order to get some sleep). I finished it in about two days (and this is a large book - over 400 pages!) so that says something as to how good it was.

Love's Reckoning was very gripping emotionally - there were times I was so upset and wanted to scream (I may have actually) and other times I wanted to cry. I didn't know how the book would end and, at one point, wanted to skip ahead to the end to find out, but didn't because I knew it would wreck the story. I don't think there was ever a dull moment to this novel. The only complaint I have is that the ending seemed a tad bit rushed (in my opinion), but it was still great and is now one of my favorite books.

The characters were fantastic and I loved all the little secrets that were throughout the book (that added a little mystery to the story) - some were really shocking!

I'm so glad that this is part of a series because I am very much looking forward to finding out what continues to happen in these characters' lives.

Overall, I loved Love's Reckoning and recommend it if you enjoy historical romances, but expect to be taken on a wild ride that'll keep you turning pages late into the night (at least it did with me).

**\*I received a complimentary copy of this book for my review. I was not required to give a positive review, only my honest opinion - which I've done. All thoughts and opinions expressed are my own.\***

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## **Margaret Chind says**

Coming into reading this book I already knew a handful of things. One, I already consider Laura's previous books to be on my keeper shelf and consider her a favorite author. Two, *Courting Morrow Little* was an incredible read and perhaps one of my ultimate favorites. Three, *The Colonel's Lady* has a palpable romance (like Julie Lessman good!) that keep me turning pages even soon after having a baby (and many distractions). Four, this is a new series and I love series beginnings! Five, have you seen the cover image?! Now, here's the problem (for one it is just after 2:30 in the morning!)... At about 125 pages in I did not have a clue where the story was going to go. Usually after reading so many novels I can take my little guess and then nicely see things unroll before my eyes as I turn the pages, but not here. I was tense, I was sad, I was elated, I was so angry, I was ridiculously giddy as if in on a secret myself, I was hopeless, and then I was so full of hope I was ready to scream outloud (but it's two am by this point and the little blossoms are sleeping...). The fact that there were so many possibilities kept me completely enraptured with pure (delightful!) agony that I just had to turn and see what might happen. What's coming next? -- This was just as engaging a read as Rita Gerlach's latest series is turning out to be!

Now seriously. Could you authors quit trying to keep vying for my favorite book position, I shouldn't have to keep changing! This is enchanting with a hint of Jacob's wives and Cinderella. My heart screams run runaway! Who needs sleep when you have novels such as this?! Eden is such a character and so real. She is seemingly a perfect good girl, but watching her grow through over the course of the two parts of this story is incredible. As a reader it is very easy to get behind her and cheer her on, and want to shake her silly at times. Silas Ballantyne is just wonderful as well. Already I have become very fond of Scottish heroes in my fiction through other authors and Silas is just, \*sigh\* fabulous.

This one is not a light read, not just something to waste time with, but this is a read that will enrapture your heart and hold on. It brings through a wealth of emotions and the characters and their lives come off the pages and into your imagination and their story unfolds. Reading the epilogue and then the sneak peek into book #2 in the end of the novel just leave me antsy. How in the world can my heart stand to wait for 2013?

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\*Thanks to Revell Books for providing a copy for review.\*

posted: <http://creativemadnessmama.com/blog/2...>

AUTHOR INTERVIEW: <http://creativemadnessmama.com/blog/2...>

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## **Julie says**

Stunning. Heart-wrenching. Breathless. Not since *Gone With the Wind* have I read an epic novel that has stolen my heart, my breath, my sleep to such a jolting degree. *Love's Reckoning* marks Laura Frantz not only as a shining star in Christian fiction today, but a shooting star who soars skyward to the glittering heights of *Rivers and Higgs*.

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## Michelle says

This novel made me quite breathless and I had that aching feeling in my chest that rarely happens these days. I love it when I care so much that I can barely breathe while reading perilous scenes. I didn't want to stop reading because the author's plot kept me turning the pages. The story was not at all predictable, which increased my anxiety over Eden's future as well as what would happen to Silas. The story can best be described as achingly beautiful. The last time I had this ache in my heart was while reading *Courting Morrow Little*, another novel by Laura Frantz. The plot was solid and the angst very believably written. The sweetest part of the story was how it was their faith that brought their hearts together in the beginning. What a beautiful expression of faith. The reader can see how a tender and sweet spirit is far more attractive to man than a comely appearance. It was hard not to love a man like Silas. He had me from the beginning because he was a man of honor.

There is something wonderful about sacrificial love that makes me think of Christ's ultimate sacrifice for us all. True love does the right thing, and that's what is best for the loved one, not the person who has strong feelings for the person holding their affection. That always makes for a heart-wrenching love story. The prose of this book was beautiful, but the deep love of the story was what stole my heart. The romance was more about spiritual beauty and a giving spirit than about mere attraction. When Eden and Silas finally had a chance to be alone...wow. I was feeling Silas's pain myself. Eden was a treasure, thus hurting him all the more when things went south for them. Not wanting to post a spoiler here, I'd encourage historical fiction lovers to read this wonderful story for themselves and be inspired to be a more loving and humble person; for a good woman is more precious than rubies. A powerful story full of emotion that made my pulse race at times, *Love's Reckoning* is making my top fiction list for 2012. It's awesome!

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## Renee says

After reading a Laura Frantz novel I love setting down to type up a review because I don't have to watch my words. Often times, especially this past summer, the books I have been reading haven't been the best and it's hard to say what I liked about the story (if anything at all!) while still trying to be respectful and mindful of the hard work that the author has put into the story. I believe I can safely say I don't think I'll ever have to worry about writing a negative review for this author. Actually, I might still have to watch my words and learn to tone things down a bit so I don't seem too "gushy." These days if I finish an almost 500 page book in 2 sittings you know it has to be good and *Love's Reckoning* was just that: good.

By now, if you're at all familiar with Ms. Frantz's work you know she has a flair for writing a story with a feel that's authentic to the century in which it's set. *Love's Reckoning* is set in late-18th century eastern Pennsylvania, specifically York County and later, Pittsburgh. I felt I could have sat down and spun wool with Eden or hammered out iron on the anvil at the smithy the setting was so detailed. Not only that, Silas Ballantyne is a blacksmith from Scotland and you figure that out rather quickly by the manner of his speaking. I'll admit to finding myself reading his words in my head using that Scottish brogue a time or two! If you like detailed stories that move at a natural pace *Love's Reckoning* will probably be a story that will grab you like it did me. Now, if you're not one who's into setting and history and want more of a "fluffy" romance this probably won't be for you but I'm not discouraging you from giving this one a try.

Eden's story is at times difficult to read since she lives in a home where love isn't expressed but anger is, both verbally and physically, and is usually aimed at her. Liege Lee, Louise Lee and Elspeth Lee Eden's family aren't in the least bit likable and I must say I won't be disappointed if we don't see more from them in the books to come in this series unless they go through some major changes in attitude. It's amazing how authors can make you love some characters and loath others just by a single word they utter or a dastardly deed and Laura Frantz did just that in this book with the Lees and a few others.

I was a bit disappointed in the ending because I would have loved to have seen more interaction between the characters in raw, gritty Pittsburgh instead of just a few rushed chapters but this is still a story worthy of my keeper shelf...and hopefully yours!

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~ My Rating: 4.5 out of 5 stars ~

\*I received a complimentary copy of this book for review from the publisher. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.\*

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## **Christy says**

There are few books anymore that I am wildly eager to read, but hand me a book with Laura Frantz's name on the cover, and I promise you, I will go into hiding until I've read that book from cover to cover. When I had no choice at times but to place my bookmark inside this haunting novel, my heart just ached to be back within its pages.

That was my journey with Love's Reckoning--a breathtakingly beautiful tale of a yearning love between two gentle souls. Eden's sweet spirit was always in danger of being squashed under her father's stern manner, and Silas's quiet strength was the rock in an otherwise tumultuous household. But their love prevailed in spite of dangerous ploys, hurtful lies, and long distances apart from one another.

I could feel the tension lurking within the walls of the Lee house because of the secret they were forced to keep or the alienation they would face in their small town. I could sense the jealousy Elspeth felt toward Eden, even though she oftentimes got what she wanted anyway. And I could imagine that, if Elspeth was standing right in front of me, I just might be tempted to slap her face. There were so many feelings and emotions for me here...many more than I'm used to experiencing in a typical novel.

That, my friends, is what makes Laura's books so exceptional. Her characters work their way into my heart and mind until they're like my friends and family. I want to invite them over for some tea or hot chocolate and talk for hours and hours. And quite possibly, the characters from Love's Reckoning may just be my favorite. Granted, I have loved Lael, Morrow, and especially Roxanna, but Eden and her loving soul will always leave a lasting memory.

So...bravo, Laura. You continue to impress this reader with each and every novel you write, and I know I'm not the only one. Our next journey with the Ballentynes can't begin soon enough.

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## **Sadie VanderKodde says**

I saw this book recommended by Becky Wade as a book she tells everyone to read. I love Becky's writing, so I was intrigued to see what she loves reading. I was not disappointed. This story is exactly what I love in a romance - slow, budding romance that turns into fierce love. I appreciate that it wasn't rushed, yet didn't feel like it was dragging out. I wanted it to continue. Other reviews I've read describe it as "heart-wrenching" - a true descriptor if ever there was one. When things were going well half-way through the book, I could hardly stand the suspense, wondering what was going to happen that necessitated the book to continue for so many more pages. But by the end, I felt like my chest was going to explode from emotion. The true test of a good book is how emotional I feel at the end. For that, this book gets 5 stars. Now off to find the sequel . . .

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## **Loraine says**

**SUMMARY:** On a bitter December day in 1785, Silas Ballantyne arrives at the door of master blacksmith Liege Lee in York, Pennsylvania. Just months from becoming a master blacksmith himself, Silas is determined to finish his apprenticeship and move west. But Liege soon discovers that Silas is a prodigious worker and craftsman and endeavors to keep him in York. Silas becomes interested in both of Liege's daughters, the gentle and faith-filled Eden and the clever and high-spirited Elspeth. When he chooses one, will the other's jealousy destroy their love?

In this sweeping family saga set in western Pennsylvania, one man's choices in love and work, in friends and enemies, set the stage for generations to come. *Love's Reckoning* is the first entry in *The Ballantyne Legacy*, a rich, multi-layered historical quartet from talented writer Laura Frantz, beginning in the late 1700s and following the Ballantyne family through the end of the Civil War.

**REVIEW:** Laura Frantz has once again written a historical romance that keeps your attention from start to finish. It contains an involved storyline with many of characters hiding secrets from their past and a family who is as dysfunctional as many in present times. Eden is an almost invisible character who often reminded me of Cinderella. She is burdened with toil from morning til night while her older sister Elspeth plays the role of the "mean stepsister" while spending her days and nights chasing men. Eden's father obviously favors Elspeth because she takes more interest in his blacksmith shop and somewhat becomes the son he didn't have. What Elspeth wants Elspeth gets. Silas, Leige's new apprentice, becomes the "Prince Charming" in this somewhat Cinderella Story. A man of strong faith and definite goals, Silas sees "the pearl of great price" underneath Eden's quiet demeanor. He also sees her desire to know more of God and grow her faith. This story does a great job of depicting historical times and the early development of the Pennsylvania area. I also appreciated the opening quotes for each chapter. Frantz' tease with her closing line will keep everyone wanting to pursue the next adventures of Silas, Eden, and the Lee and Greathouse families.

**FAVORITE QUOTES:** "But loneliness, she knew, was an elusive notion. Wasn't she more lonesome in the midst of her busy house than anywhere else on earth?"

"Books, like friends, should be few and well-chosen." (Samuel Johnson as quoted)

"I expect to pass through this world but once. Therefore any good work, kiness, or service I can render to any person or animal, let me do it now, for I will not pass this way again.

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## Ruth says

Eden Lee longs to make a fresh start in Philadelphia, to escape her father Liege's temper and her sister Elspeth's selfish machinations. Her fiery hair and family reputation mask a quiet spirit that hungers after God, desiring nothing more than the freedom to exercise her fledgling faith freely. But before she can make good on her dream of escape, her blacksmith father's new apprentice arrives, setting into motion plans of marriage and familial expectations that threaten to derail Eden's closely guarded dreams.

Silas Ballantyne has plans of his own to head west once his apprenticeship is finished, dreams he is determined shall not be thwarted by his contentious master or his tempting daughters. However, Silas finds himself irresistibly drawn to Eden's sweet spirit in defiance of Liege and Elspeth's determination to ensnare the talented blacksmith in a web of deceit. As love blossoms between Silas and Eden, fostered by whispered stairwell meetings and exchanged scraps of scripture, the long-latent embers of jealousy between Liege's daughters ignite. When all they hold dear is threatened, Silas and Eden are forced to decide if their faith and love is enough to withstand the heartache that would see their hoped-for future destroyed,

It has been far too long since I've lost myself within the pages of a Laura Frantz novel. Reading *Love's Reckoning* was akin to water falling on dry land, a balm to my soul sorely in need of Frantz's craftsmanship and heart. The first installment in a multi-generational family epic, *Love's Reckoning* is replete with Frantz's trademarks: carefully-crafted characters, a heart-rending love story, and a nearly tactile sense of time and a nearly tactile sense of time and place. Within these pages, late 18th-century Pennsylvania springs to life with color and depth. If a novel is her canvas, Frantz paints with the skill of a master.

Here Frantz blends shades of the Cinderella story with a familial and romance dynamic reminiscent of the biblical saga of Jacob, Esau, Rachel, and Laban. Eden is a classic Cinderella figure, the family drudge who still maintains her sweet spirit. In less capable hands, seeing the abuse she endures at the hands of family members could have made her seem weak. But instead, Eden is an intricately wrought portrait of one who chooses again and again the sacrifice of kindness and belief with no expectation of reward (much like the recent live-action version of Cinderella).

While Silas is cast in the role of prince/redeemer, both he and Eden's character arcs are colored with shades of Jacob's story (with Elspeth cast alternately as Esau and Leah, in the most extreme forms of that character archetype). Their journey is a fight for an inheritance beyond what the eye can see -- a twin legacy of earthly and spiritual favor. Theirs is a story of lives the enemy to all believers would see destroyed (John 10:10), of potential unrealized and dreams unfulfilled. But in the pain of circumstance, those dreams, once surrendered and yielded to the God who first planted them within their hearts, blossom into a gorgeously wrought illustration of redemptive promise (Joel 2:25).

For those who crave realism in inspirational fiction or wonder if it even exists, they need look no further than here for one such example. While *Love's Reckoning* is everything I crave in historical romance -- research, depth, passion -- within these pages lies a tale of emotional abuse, a physical assault, and shattered dreams. Frantz never exploits the very real heartache her characters endure, but within the framework of their circumstances sketch a story of hope and redemption with compassion and sensitivity.

Authors like Frantz are why I believe so strongly in the possibility of inspirational fiction. This is a wildly entertaining tale, yes, epic in its scope and intimate in its emotional reckoning, a sweeping saga in every

sense that term implies. But more than that, Silas and Eden's story is one of hope and a faith at times no bigger than a grain of mustard seed, and the ability of that faith in action to transform and redeem the most broken among us.

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## **Jane says**

This review originally appeared on the Historical Novel Society website. Review copy received from publisher via HNS.

Eden Lee's tyrannical father is determined that his new apprentice, Silas Ballantyne, will marry one of his daughters. The family assumes it will be bold, beautiful Elspeth, whose illegitimate child is being passed off as her mother's son. Timid, quiet Eden deplores the deception but does not want to marry; she has other plans, and soon learns that Silas too has ambitions beyond a blacksmith's trade.

*Love's Reckoning* is the first of a series tracing the Ballantyne legacy down through several generations, and as such has quite a few storylines to set up. This is well done, with plenty of twists and threads to lead into future novels. The late 1700s Pennsylvania setting is convincingly rendered, although I personally prefer that the author not rely on "twas," "mayhap," and other such ornamental flourishes to remind the reader that we are not in modern times.

Occasional writing quirks could have been picked up at the editing stage. The words "nearly" and "winced" are overused, generally in combination, and some phrases struck me as odd ("with a flurry of her hand"). There are some misplaced modifiers, and I struggled a little with the timeline, which at moments seems vaguely defined.

My biggest issue with this story, however, is that the good characters are too overwhelmingly wholesome, while the bad characters are unremittingly unpleasant. I would have liked to see more nuances, especially in the case of Elspeth, who would benefit from some vulnerability.

The Christian elements are handled with subtlety and grace, making this novel a good candidate to succeed with a secular readership. *Love's Reckoning* has greater depth than a straightforward romance, and promises well for an interesting series.

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## **Gwendolyn Gage says**

Who will arrive first? Silas Ballantyne, the new blacksmith apprentice, or Elspeth's baby? If the baby comes first, Liege Lee is determined that his daughter Elspeth will be given in marriage to Ballantyne, and the babe's true parentage kept a secret. If the apprentice comes first, then his daughter Eden will marry him. But Silas Ballantyne's plans have no room for marriage, regardless of tradition. He will finish out his required years of apprenticeship, and then head West.

Instead of the strong and feisty heroine celebrated in most novels today, "Love's Reckoning" introduces Eden, a lovely heroine with a gentle and quiet spirit. Eden's personality harmonizes realistically with 18th century culture, and I found it a refreshing change from novels that try to marry an 18th century setting with a heroine who thinks and acts like a modern woman. Silas was as smart and discerning as he was talented,

and he instantly won my heart for being able to look past a woman's beauty and see her true character. The Scottish accent might've helped too.

I always enjoy Frantz' rich setting description and lyrical prose, but my favorite aspect of "Love's Reckoning" was watching two people fall deeply and hopelessly in love, despite different ambitions, unfair circumstances, and the schemes of evil people. The book is gently paced for a romance that develops over time, but there are places in the novel that are tense and suspenseful. A little over halfway through, I refused to put the book down, and when I came across an unsettling jump in years close to the end, I was tempted to skim, nearly biting my nails to know how everything would turn out.

It's not easy to write a story heavy with sorrow and longing without making it depressing, but Frantz not only pulls it off, she masterfully uses the story's events and tone to enrich the characters' love story, reminding me of Romans 8:28. A beautiful, haunting romance that has found a home on my favorites shelf.

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### **Beth says**

When I pick up a novel by Laura Frantz, I settle in to savor the story, and Love's Reckoning is definitely a story to savor. I enjoyed every minute that I spent reading it.

Eden Lee is a wonderful character. At times, I desperately wanted her to stand up for herself, to defend her self-worth, but with a domineering father and sister and a mother that didn't defend her, it was easily understandable that she didn't. The Lee home is a home of secrets and lies, and it was all Eden could do to rise above it. Eden has a gently spirit, and, Silas...well, let's just say, I could have swooned when I read his scenes. Frantz just knows how to amp up the tension and really build a swoon-worthy romance. The progression of their relationship was so natural. And, what can I say, there's just something about a man from Scotland :)

The story evoked a lot of my emotions, which is always a good sign for me (even if I was angry at some of the characters, haha!). There were some great, exciting plot twists that shocked without coming across as feeling contrived. The description of the setting was superb. The setting had a real tone, if that makes sense-- I really felt like I was there on the iced-over pond or standing close to the fiery forge or dancing at a ball. The seamless flow of story had me from the first chapter. There was a jump in time, which sort of threw me off, but it was realistic, and it was needed. The ending was strong and left me eagerly awaiting the second book in the Ballantyne Legacy.

I highly recommend for fans of historical and romantic tales.

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### **Olivia says**

[I thought nine years seemed a bit too long for Silas and Eden to be apart. (hide spoiler)]

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