

A Legacy of Fire, Faith, and Finding Myself

Free Chapter

C.K. Ball

Born of Kings: A Legacy of Fire, Faith, and Finding Myself

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Prolouge: When Bloodlines Converge

Some stories begin with a glance across a crowded room.

This one began a thousand years earlier.

When Rollo of Normandy conquered French soil and founded a dynasty, he could not have known his bloodline would split like a river around stone. One branch flowing through his son William Longsword. Another through his daughter Gerloc.

Two streams. Separate paths. Kings and commoners, warriors and pioneers, oceans crossed and empires built.

For thirty-five generations, these bloodlines traveled the world apart.

The year was 1947. A dance floor in small-town America. Big band music and nervous laughter. Young men fresh from war trying to remember how to be civilians again.

Lawrence James Ball stood near the refreshment table. Tall. Blue-eyed. Home on leave.

Then he saw her.

Mary Eunice. Dark hair cascading down her back. A quiet smile that could stop a heart.

He did not know they shared the same ancestor. Did not know that when he crossed that dance floor, he was completing a journey that began in Viking longships and medieval castles.

Ancient blood recognizing ancient blood.

When their eyes met, something deeper than attraction sparked between them. Recognition that went beyond sight or reason. The kind of pull that builds empires and refuses to surrender.

Destiny completing itself.

From their union came me.

C.K. Ball. The convergence point where two branches of Rollo's bloodline finally reunited after a millennium apart.

In my parents' love story, I discovered the same fire that burned in Viking raiders. The same courage that conquered kingdoms. The same faith that survives impossible odds.

This is the story of how ancient blood becomes modern courage.

How a destined meeting in 1947 sparked a love that defied every obstacle.

How that love was tested by fire. By loss. By challenges that would have broken lesser souls.

And how it held.

Through everything that came after, it held.

Chapter One

The Dance

My mother told me this story late one night, her voice soft with memory. The letters they wrote—all those passionate, hopeful words—had burned in the fire that took our house. But the story lived in her, every detail sharp as broken glass. Hearing her remember that night, I understood for the first time where my own fire came from. The refusal to settle. The courage to risk everything for what your heart knows is true.

The war was finally over.

Music filled the air again. Real music.

The kind that made your heart skip and your feet itch to move.

Not the careful, subdued melodies of the war years. This was celebration music.

Joy made audible.

Mary Eunice smoothed her hands over her best dress. Pre-war silk in soft blue that brought out the warmth in her brown eyes.

Her raven black hair cascaded in luxurious curls down her back, each strand catching the lamplight like spun midnight.

She had spent extra time making every curl perfect. Her mother's pearl earrings caught the light when she turned her head.

The church hall's mirror reflected a young woman who should have been happy. Engaged to a respectable man.

Wedding planned. Trousseau nearly complete.

So why did she feel like she was suffocating?

Before leaving her room that evening, she had done something she rarely did anymore. Knelt beside her bed and prayed.

Not the rote prayers from childhood, but something deeper.

God, if this life isn't what You want for me, show me. Please. I need to know.

The prayer felt dangerous. Like opening a door she might not be able to close again.

"Mary Eunice, you look stunning," Robert said as she emerged from the powder room. He stood exactly where she had left him.

Robert worked at the First National Bank. Wore pressed shirts every day.

Never had a hair out of place.

Everything about their relationship made perfect sense on paper.

"Thank you," she murmured. "You look very handsome tonight."

And he did. Pleasant features, kind brown eyes, steady job that would provide well for a family.

Her mother never tired of reminding her how fortunate she was.

"Shall we find our table?" Robert offered his arm with the same courteous gesture he made every time they went anywhere together.

The church had organized the dance as a welcome home celebration for returning soldiers. Paper streamers in red, white, and blue hung from the ceiling.

Someone had strung lights around the windows, casting everything in warm, golden glow.

Fresh flowers adorned every table. The refreshment table groaned under the weight of donated cakes, pies, and punch bowls.

The small band occupied a makeshift stage at the far end, playing "Moonlight Serenade." Couples swayed together on the polished wooden floor.

Mary Eunice loved to dance. It was one of her greatest joys.

One of the few times she felt truly free.

But as Robert led her stiffly around the floor, his movements precise but uninspired, she found herself distracted. He counted the steps under his breath.

"One-two-three, one-two-three," he murmured. "Are you following, Mary Eunice?"

"Yes," she said, though her heart was not in it.

That was when she saw him.

He stood near the refreshment table. Tall figure in army uniform.

The olive drab fabric fit him perfectly.

Even from across the crowded dance floor, she could see he was strikingly handsome. Not in Robert's pleasant, conventional way.

In a manner that made her breath catch.

Dark blonde hair caught the light. When he turned slightly, she glimpsed the most incredible blue eyes she had ever seen.

Ocean blue. The kind that could drown you if you stared too long.

He was broad-shouldered and strong-looking, the kind of man who worked with his hands. His uniform jacket stretched across a chest that spoke of physical labor, not desk work.

There was something about the way he carried himself. Confident but not arrogant.

Strong but gentle.

And in that moment, Mary Eunice felt something shift. Like an answer to the prayer she had whispered in her bedroom.

This. This is what I've been waiting for.

"Mary Eunice, you're not listening to a word I'm saying." Robert's voice cut through her reverie with sharp disapproval.

"I'm sorry," she murmured, forcing herself to focus on her fiancé's face. "What were you saying about the harvest?"

"The Henderson farm. They're expecting their best wheat yield in five years."

Robert's voice carried barely concealed irritation.

"It means good business for the bank when they come in for their equipment loans next spring."

But even as Robert droned on about crop yields and market prices, Mary Eunice found her gaze wandering back to the stranger by the refreshment table. He was not dancing, just standing quietly, watching the couples move around the floor.

There was something different about his stillness. Not awkward or uncomfortable, but watchful.

As if he was taking everything in, memorizing it.

Like a man who knew his time was limited.

As if he could feel her watching, he looked up.

Their eyes met across the crowded room.

The world stopped.

The music continued to play, couples continued to sway, but for Mary Eunice, everything else ceased to exist. There was only this moment, this connection.

This impossible feeling that she was looking at someone she had been waiting her whole life to meet.

She did not believe in love at first sight. She was a practical girl, raised by practical parents to make sensible choices.

But at that moment, looking into those blue eyes, she felt something shift inside her chest. Like a door opening in a room she had not even known existed.

Like God Himself had just answered her prayer.

The stranger smiled. Just a small curve of his lips.

Not the practiced smile of a man trying to charm, but something genuine.

Something that seemed meant just for her.

Mary Eunice felt her cheeks flush warm. Her heart began to hammer against her ribs like a bird trying to escape a cage.

"Mary Eunice." Robert's voice was sharp now. "You're being extremely rude."

She realized she had stopped dancing entirely. They were standing in the middle of the floor while other couples moved around them.

Several people were looking.

"I need some air," she said suddenly, pulling away from Robert mid-sentence.

"But we're in the middle of a dance—"

"I'll just be a moment." She was already moving toward the side door that led to the church's small garden.

What was happening to her?

The evening air was cooler outside, carried the scent of roses and jasmine from the church gardens. Mary Eunice took a deep breath, trying to steady herself.

Her hands were trembling.

She closed her eyes and whispered another prayer. *God, is this You? Is this Your answer?*

The silence that followed felt alive somehow. Expectant.

"Beautiful evening, isn't it?"

The voice was warm, deep, with just a hint of roughness that suggested its owner spent his days outdoors rather than behind a desk.

Mary Eunice spun around, her heart leaping into her throat.

There he was.

Up close, he was even more magnificent. Those blue eyes were kind but intense, holding a depth that suggested he had seen things.

Experienced things that had marked him.

When he smiled, she felt like she might forget how to breathe.

"Yes," she managed, her voice barely above a whisper. "Very beautiful."

"I'm Lawrence," he said, extending his hand. "Lawrence Ball. I'm home on leave."

The last three words carried weight. Not home for good.

Home for now.

"Mary Eunice," she replied, taking his offered hand. His palm was slightly rough, callused from work.

The moment their skin touched, she felt a jolt of electricity run up her arm, settling somewhere in the region of her heart.

From the way his eyes widened slightly, she suspected he felt it too.

"That's a lovely name," he said, and she noticed he did not immediately release her hand. "Mary Eunice. It suits you."

"I couldn't help but notice you inside," he continued, finally releasing her hand, though his fingers seemed reluctant to let go. "You look like you love to dance."

"I do," she said, surprised by how breathless she sounded. "More than almost anything."

Dancing was the one time Mary Eunice felt completely herself. Not the dutiful daughter, not the proper young lady, not the bride-to-be with her future mapped out in careful detail.

Just herself, moving to music.

"Would you like to dance with me?" The question hung in the air between them, loaded with possibility.

"I mean, I know you came with someone, and I don't want to cause any trouble, but..."

"Yes," she said before he could finish the sentence.

The word came out before she could think. Before doubt could creep in.

And in that moment, she knew. This was the answer she had been praying for.

What was she doing? She was engaged.

She should not be accepting invitations to dance from strange men, no matter how handsome.

Her mother would be scandalized.

But something about Lawrence Ball made all those considerations seem small and distant.

They walked back inside together. Mary Eunice was dimly aware of Robert calling her name from across the room, his voice carrying a note of rising panic.

But she could not seem to make herself care about Robert's feelings just now.

Lawrence led her onto the dance floor just as the band struck up a slow, sweet melody. "I'll Be Seeing You," one of her favorite songs.

When he took her in his arms, she felt like she was coming home to a place she had never been before.

He was a wonderful dancer. Not like Robert, who counted steps and worried about form.

Lawrence moved like dancing was as natural as breathing.

Strong and sure, leading her effortlessly around the floor with an intuitive understanding of the music.

She felt delicate and graceful in his arms. Like she was made of silk and starlight.

Like she was floating.

They did not talk much. They did not need to.

It was as if they had been dancing together for years instead of minutes.

He anticipated her movements, and she followed his lead without conscious thought.

"You're beautiful," he murmured near her ear, and she shivered at the warmth of his breath against her skin.

"Lawrence—"

"I know this is crazy," he said gently, his voice low enough that only she could hear. "I know we just met. But I feel like I've been looking for you my whole life."

Mary Eunice looked up into his eyes and saw her impossible feelings reflected there. This wonderful, terrifying sensation that had overtaken her completely.

This sense of recognition, as if her soul had found its match.

"I feel it too," she whispered.

The admission hung between them. Dangerous and exhilarating.

She was engaged to another man, had been planning her wedding for months.

But in this moment, dancing with Lawrence Ball, none of that seemed to matter.

They danced through two more songs, lost in their little world while the rest of the celebration swirled around them.

Mary Eunice had never felt so alive. Every nerve ending seemed to spark where Lawrence's hands touched her.

Until a heavy hand fell on Lawrence's shoulder.

"Excuse me." Robert's voice was tight with barely controlled anger.

His face was flushed, his usually perfect hair slightly mussed.

"I believe you're dancing with my fiancée."

Lawrence stepped back immediately. But he did not release Mary Eunice's hand.

"I'm sorry, I didn't realize—"

"Well, now you do," Robert snapped. "Mary Eunice, we're leaving. Now."

"Robert, please—"

"Now, Mary Eunice."

But Mary Eunice did not move. She looked at Lawrence, then at Robert, and felt something crystallize inside her.

She was not going anywhere.

"No," she said quietly.

Robert's face flushed red. "Excuse me?"

"I said no." Her voice was stronger now. "I'm not ready to leave."

"Mary Eunice, you're making a scene." Robert grabbed her arm. "People are staring."

"Let go of her." Lawrence's voice was calm but carried an unmistakable edge of warning.

"This is none of your business, soldier boy." Robert snarled.

"She's my fiancée, and she's coming with me."

"Only if she wants to," Lawrence replied evenly. "And it sounds like she doesn't."

The tension between the two men crackled like lightning. Mary Eunice could see that other couples had stopped dancing.

All watching. All staring.

Her cheeks burned with embarrassment.

But she stood her ground.

"Robert, you're being unreasonable," she said. "I was just dancing."

"Just dancing?" Robert's voice rose loud enough that people at nearby tables turned to look.

"You've been making cow eyes at this stranger all evening, and now you're 'just dancing'? What kind of woman does that to her fiancé?"

The words stung. But they also sparked something fierce inside Mary Eunice.

"The kind of woman who knows the difference between a dance and a prison sentence," she shot back.

Robert's face went white, then red again. "Fine," he spat.

"If you want to make a fool of yourself over some pretty boy, be my guest. But don't expect me to stand here and watch."

He turned on his heel and strode toward the door. "Find your own way home, Mary Eunice. I'm done."

The door slammed behind him.

The silence that followed was deafening. Mary Eunice stood frozen in the middle of the dance floor.

Every eye in the room on her.

Her cheeks burned with humiliation.

Then Lawrence stepped closer and offered her his arm.

"How about we get some punch?" he suggested gently, as if nothing unusual had happened at all.

The simple gesture broke something loose inside her. She found herself smiling despite everything.

"That sounds perfect."

They walked to the refreshment table together. Gradually, the other couples went back to their conversations and dancing.

Lawrence handed her a cup of punch and led her to a quiet corner where they could talk without being overheard.

"I'm sorry," Mary Eunice said, staring down at her punch. "I've never... I don't know what came over me."

"Don't apologize," Lawrence said firmly. "You didn't do anything wrong. You danced with someone at a dance. That's what people do at dances."

"Not engaged people," she said miserably. "At least, not according to my mother."

"What about according to you?"

She looked up at him, surprised by the question. "I... I don't know. I've never really thought about it before."

"Maybe it's time you did," he said gently.

They talked for the rest of the evening, sitting in that corner of the church hall while the dance swirled around them.

Lawrence told her about his work as a logger before the war. About growing up in the Oregon forests.

About his dreams of having his own land someday.

He also told her, quietly, that he had two more years of service ahead of him. Orders to report back to Fort Lewis in three days, then ship out for occupation duty in Japan.

"The war's over," he said with a rueful smile, "but the army's not done with me yet."

Mary Eunice found herself sharing things she had never told anyone. Her love of reading.

Her secret desire to travel.

Her feeling that she was meant for something more than the quiet, predictable life that had been planned for her.

"I shouldn't be telling you all this," she said at one point. "I'm engaged to be married."

"Are you?" Lawrence asked quietly.

The question hung in the air between them. Loaded with possibilities and impossible complications.

When the dance finally ended, Lawrence walked her home through the quiet streets of Pendleton. They stopped at the front gate of her family's house, both reluctant for the evening to end.

Both aware that this might be all they would ever have.

"I'd like to see you again," Lawrence said. "I know it's complicated. I know I'm leaving soon, and I know you're engaged. But if you'd like that too..."

Mary Eunice looked up at the house where her parents slept. Where her wedding dress hung in the closet.

Where her entire future had been planned out in neat, sensible lines.

Then she looked at Lawrence, standing in the moonlight with his blue eyes full of hope and impossible dreams.

She thought about the prayer she had whispered in her bedroom. The certainty she had felt when their eyes met across that crowded room.

Sometimes faith meant trusting what your heart knew, even when your head said it was impossible.

"I'd like that very much," she whispered.

He smiled and took her hand, lifting it to his lips to press a gentle kiss on her knuckles. "Until tomorrow, then."

Mary Eunice watched him walk away. Then she let herself quietly into the house.

She tiptoed up the stairs and into her bedroom, where she sat on the edge of her bed and stared at the engagement ring on her finger.

It felt heavy suddenly. Like a weight she had been carrying without realizing it.

She slipped to her knees beside the bed. The words came without thought, simple and certain.

Thank You. Thank You for showing me. Give me the courage to do what I know is right.

The prayer settled over her like a blanket. Warm and sure.

Three days later, she gave the ring back.

The conversation with Robert was brief and painful. He was coldly furious, calling her a foolish girl who would regret throwing away a good man for a fantasy.

"You'll wait for him?" Robert's voice was bitter with disbelief.

"A man you met at a dance. A man who'll be gone for two years with no guarantee he'll come back the same person. If he comes back at all?"

He was not entirely wrong. She barely knew Lawrence.

Had spent only one evening with him.

He was leaving in three days, and she had no idea when she would see him again.

Completely impractical. Utterly reckless.

But when she looked at Lawrence's face when she told him she was free, when she saw joy and relief and love shining in those blue eyes, she knew she had made the right choice.

Her mother was another matter entirely.

"Mary Eunice Maynard, you have lost your mind," her mother declared when she learned about the broken engagement. "Robert Henley is a good man with excellent prospects. His family has money, standing in the community."

"I don't love him, Mother," Mary Eunice said quietly.

"Love!" Her mother scoffed.

"Girls your age think love is all butterflies and romance, but I'm telling you, those feelings fade. Respect, compatibility, and security are the things that matter in a marriage."

"What about happiness?"

"Happiness comes from doing your duty and making sensible choices," her mother replied firmly. "Not from chasing after some soldier you met at a dance."

Her mother's voice rose. "A soldier who's shipping out for two years! What do you even know about this Lawrence person? Where is his family from? What does his father do?"

Mary Eunice did not have good answers to most of those questions. She knew Lawrence was kind and strong and made her laugh.

She knew that when he looked at her, she felt beautiful and valued and alive in a way she never had before.

She knew that when he kissed her—which he had, just once, standing by the river where they had walked the day after the dance—she felt like she understood for the first time what all the fuss about love was about.

She also knew he would be gone in two days.

But she could not explain any of that to her mother. Could not explain that she had prayed for guidance and received an answer so clear it took her breath away.

Some things had to be taken on faith.

"Young ladies do not break engagements over a pretty face and a few sweet words," her mother continued. "What will people say? What will Pastor Williams think? The Henleys have been members of this church for thirty years!"

"I don't care what people say," Mary Eunice said.

She was surprised to realize she meant it.

"Well, you should care," her mother snapped. "Because reputation is everything for a woman. You mark my words, young lady—you'll regret this foolishness."

But Mary Eunice did not believe that would happen. Call it intuition, call it faith, call it divine certainty.

She knew with absolute conviction that Lawrence Ball was the man she was meant to spend her life with.

Everything else, all the practical concerns and social expectations, seemed small and distant compared to the magnitude of what she felt for him.

Standing in her childhood bedroom that night, looking out the window at the stars, Mary Eunice thought about the moment she had first seen Lawrence across that crowded dance floor. How everything had changed in an instant.

How her whole life had pivoted on that single look.

She was twenty-one years old. She had just broken off her engagement.

Her mother thought she had lost her mind.

Maybe she had.

But if this was madness, it was the most wonderful feeling in the world. And if this was faith, it was the kind that moved mountains.

Outside her window, the Oregon night was full of possibility. Mary Eunice fell asleep smiling, her heart full of dreams about a future she could not wait to begin.

Hearing my mother tell this story decades later, I understood her courage in a way I never had before. She chose love over security. Faith over fear. A soldier leaving for war over a safe life in a small town. That same courage would be tested again and again—by fire, by loss, by challenges neither of them could have imagined that night. But it held. Through everything that came after, it held.

Chapter Two

About the Author

A bout the Author

C.K. Ball never expected that a little blue suitcase tucked away in a closet would change everything. What began as a collection of dusty family documents left by her mother became the foundation for an extraordinary discovery that would span sixty generations and over a thousand years of royal lineage.

With the help of her granddaughter, whose passion for genealogical research unlocked the secrets hidden in those yellowed papers, Connie learned that her family's legacy stretched back through centuries of kings and conquerors—from Odin and Frigg of the Æsir through the legendary kings of Denmark, to Rollo (Hrólfur), the first Duke of Normandy, and ultimately to William the Conqueror himself. When her granddaughter published *Our Royal Lineage*, (Alter, J.B.,2024), documenting every verified connection through sixty generations of their remarkable family tree, it became clear that the strength and resilience that had carried their family through generations had truly royal roots.

Inspired by this revelation, Connie set out to write not just a genealogy, but the lived experiences of real people who carried royal blood through ordinary days and extraordinary challenges. She completed an epic eighty-year family saga, spanning from 1945 to 2025, chronicling the triumphs and tragedies, love and loss, survival and strength that define the Ball family legacy.

Drawing from her mother's stories of survival and her personal connection to her family history, C.K. Ball weaves together a narrative that proves royal heritage lives not in crowns and castles, but in the unbreakable spirit that refuses to surrender. Her writing captures the lighter, conversational tone of family storytelling while honoring the profound weight of generational wisdom passed down through the ages.

When she's not writing, Connie operates SignDoc USA, a successful nationwide notary platform business that she developed in 2015, demonstrating the same entrepreneurial spirit and determination that has defined generations of her family. She lives in Arizona and continues to be amazed by the treasures that can be found in the most unexpected places—like a little blue suitcase that had been waiting all along to reveal the truth about where fighters and kings intersect in the human heart.

Born of Kings: A Legacy of Fire, Faith, and Finding Myself is her debut work, a testament to the power of family stories and the royal blood that flows through ordinary lives.

Chapter Three

Book Releases

For sixty generations, a royal bloodline has endured. These are not distant legends—they are the author’s own forebears, their lives echoing across the centuries into the author’s story.

Release Order

Born of Kings: Hrothgar the Dragon King

Born of Kings: The Dukes of Normandy (Omnibus Edition)

Born of Kings: Faith, Fire, and Finding Myself (Memoir)

Born of Kings: Ragnvald the Wise

Born of Kings: Rollo the Walker

Born of Kings: William Longsword

Born of Kings: Richard the Fearless

Born of Kings: Richard the Good

Born of Kings: Robert the Magnificent

Born of Kings: William the Conqueror

Biorn of Kings: The Alpha and the Omega

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BORN OF KINGS