

The Devaney Brothers: Ryan and Sean: Ryan's PlaceSean's Reckoning (The Devaneys)

By Sherryl Woods

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Sean's Reckoning

Son of a shattered family, fireman Sean Devaney knows love never lasts, so he refuses to chance it. Then he meets single mom Deanna Blackwell, who has just lost everything in a devastating fire. Despite the warning in Sean's head, he's drawn to protect the stunning woman and her son. Sean may be tough enough to storm burning buildings…but is he brave enough to risk building a family of his own?

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Editorial Review

Review
"Skillfully introducing readers to The Devaneys, Sherryl Woods scores another winner..." RT Book Reviews on Sean's Reckoning

"Sherryl Woods writes emotionally satisfying novels about family, friendship and home. Truly feel-great reads!"-#1 New York Times bestselling author Debbie Macomber

"Woods is a master heartstring puller..." Publishers Weekly on Seaview Inn

"Woods' readers will eagerly anticipate her trademark small-town setting, loyal friendships, and honorable mentors as they meet new characters and reconnect with familiar ones in this heartwarming tale."-Booklist on Home in Carolina

"Once again, Woods, with such authenticity, weaves a tale of true love and the challenges that can knock up against that love."-RT Book Reviews on Beach Lane

About the Author

With her roots firmly planted in the South, Sherryl Woods has written many of her more than 100 books in that distinctive setting, whether in her home state of Virginia, her adopted state, Florida, or her much-adored South Carolina. Sherryl is best known for her ability to creating endearing small town communities and families. She is the New York Times and USA Today bestselling author of over 75 romances for Silhouette Desire and Special Edition.

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Ryan Devaney hated holidays. Not only were they lousy for business, but the few people who did walk into his Boston pub were usually just about as depressed as he was. The jukebox tended to blast out its most soulful tunes, which might have reduced him to tears if he hadn't given up shedding them a long time ago. Thanksgiving, with its bittersweet memories, had always been worst of all. And this year promised to be no different.

Outside there was the scent of snow in the crisp air, and back in Ryan's kitchen, his cook was already baking the dozens of pumpkin pies Ryan would be taking to the homeless shelter and also serving to the handful of people who showed up at the pub for a lonely meal tomorrow. Ryan had a very dim recollection of a time when both aromas would have stirred happy memories, but those days were long gone. It had been more than twenty years since he'd had anything at all for which to be thankful.

Even as the thought crossed his mind, he brought himself up short. Father Francis-the priest who evidently considered saving Ryan's soul his personal mission-would blister him with a disapproving lecture if he ever heard him say such a thing aloud. The priest, whose church was just down the block and whose parish benefitted from Ryan's generosity, had a very low opinion of Ryan's tendency to wallow in self-pity around

holidays.

"You have a roof over your head. You have money in your pocket and warm food in your belly," Father Francis had chided on more than one occasion, disappointment clouding his gaze. "You have a business that prospers and customers who rely on you. You have countless others who depend on you for food and shelter, though they don't know it. How can you say there are no blessings in your life? I'm ashamed of you, Ryan Devaney. Truly ashamed."

As if Ryan had conjured him up just then, Father Francis slid onto an empty stool at the busy bar and gave Ryan his usual perceptive once-over. "Indulging again, I see."

Ryan winced at the disapproving tone. "Haven't touched a drop," he said, knowing perfectly well that liquor was the last concern on the priest's mind.

"Ah, Ryan, my boy, do you honestly believe you can get away with trying that one on me?"

Ryan grinned at the white-haired man, who still had a hint of Ireland in his voice. "It was worth a try. What can I get you on this chilly night?"

"Would a cup of Irish coffee be too much trouble? The wind is whipping out there, and my old bones can't take it the way they once did."

"For you, Father, nothing is too much trouble," Ryan told him with total sincerity. As annoying as he sometimes found the priest, Ryan owed him his life. Father Francis had snatched him out of the depths of despair and trouble many years ago and set him on a path that had landed him here, operating his own business, rather than sitting in a jail cell. "Why aren't you home in front of a fire?"

"I've been to visit the shelter. We've a new family in there tonight. Can you imagine anything sadder than being forced to go to a homeless shelter for the first time on Thanksgiving eve, when everyone else is fixing turkey and baking pies and preparing to count their blessings?"

Ryan gave him a sharp look. It had been Thanksgiving eve, seventeen years ago, when Father Francis had taken him to the St. Mary's shelter, scared and hungry and totally alone. Just fifteen, Ryan had been angry at the world and had barely managed to escape being arrested for shoplifting, thanks to the priest's influence with the local police precinct and the outraged shop owner.

"No, I can't imagine anything sadder," he said tersely. "As you well know. What do you want?"

Father Francis smiled, a twinkle in his eye. "Not so very much. Will you talk to them tomorrow? Your own story is an inspiration to many in the neighborhood. Hearing what you've accomplished under difficult circumstances will give them a reason to hope."

"I imagine you think I can find work for at least one of them, as well," Ryan said with a note of resignation in his voice.

There had been a time when he'd had a formal business plan for his pub, complete with goals and bottom-line projections. Taking in Father Francis's strays had pretty much thrown that plan into chaos, but if the priest had asked him to cater a funeral in hell, he would have found some way to do it. Hopefully, this latest request would require less drastic action.

"Well?" he prodded.

"One…or both. The fact of the matter is, I understand the mother is a wonderful cook. Didn't you tell me that you're short-staffed in the kitchen?" Father Francis inquired innocently. Before Ryan could reply, he rushed on, "And with the holiday season coming on, you'll be busier than ever in here as folks gather to warm up a bit after their shopping. And some of the local businesses like to use your back room for their Christmas parties, isn't that right? Perhaps you could use another waiter, at least through New Year's."

Ryan cursed his loose tongue. He was going to have to remember that Father Francis was a sneaky, devious man, always looking to pair up his strays with people who casually remarked on some need or another. There had been one point when half his waitresses had been unwed mothers-to-be. For a brief time, he'd been certain his private dining room was going to wind up as a nursery, but even Father Francis had stopped short of making that request. The priest's grudging acknowledgment that a pub was no place for infant day care suggested, however, that the thought had crossed his mind.

"Hiring an extra waiter is no problem. As for the woman, can she fix corned beef and cabbage, Irish stew, soda bread?" Ryan asked.

The priest looked vaguely uncomfortable. "Isn't it time for a bit of a change?" He pulled the bright-green, laminated menu from its rack on the counter and pointed out the entrées that had been the same since the opening on St. Patrick's Day eight years ago. Even the daily specials had remained constant. "It's a bit boring, don't you think?"

"This is an Irish pub," Ryan reminded him dryly. "And my customers like knowing they can count on having fish and chips on Fridays and stew on Saturdays."

"But people eventually tire of eating the same old things. Perhaps a little spice would liven things up."

Spice? Ryan studied him warily. "What exactly can this woman cook?"

The priest's expression brightened. "I understand her enchiladas are outstanding," he reported enthusiastically.

Ryan frowned. "Let me get this straight. You're asking me to hire someone to cook Mexican food in my Irish pub?"

He shuddered when he considered how his bornin-Dublin cook was likely to take to that news. Rory O'Malley was going to be slamming pots and pans around for a month, assuming he didn't simply walk off the job. Rory, with his thick Irish brogue and a belly the size of Santa's thanks to his fondness for ale, had a kind heart, but he could throw a tantrum better than any temperamental French chef. Because his kitchen had never run more smoothly, Ryan tried his best to stay out of Rory's way and to do nothing to offend him.

The priest plastered an upbeat expression on his face. "Ryan's Place will become the most talked-about restaurant in the city, a fine example of our melting pot culture."

"Save it," Ryan muttered, his already sour mood sinking even lower, because despite the absurdity and the threat of a rebellion in the kitchen, he was going to do as he'd been asked to do. "Send her in day after tomorrow, but she'd better be a quick learner. I am not serving tacos in this place, and that's that. Does she at least speak English?"

"Enough," Father Francis said.

He spoke with the kind of poker face that had Ryan groaning. "I should let you be the one to explain all this to Rory," Ryan grumbled.

"Rory's a fine Irish lad and a recent immigrant himself," Father Francis declared optimistically. "I'm sure he'll be agreeable enough when he knows all the facts. And surely he'll see the benefit in the positive reviews likely to come his way."

"On the off chance he doesn't take the news as well as you're predicting, I sincerely hope you can find your way around a kitchen, Father, because I have an apron back there with your name on it."

"Let's pray it doesn't come to that," the priest said with an uncharacteristic frown. "If it weren't for Mrs. Malloy at the rectory and your own Rory, I'd starve." He glanced toward the doorway, his expression suddenly brightening. "Now, my boy, just look at what the wind's brought in. If this one isn't a sight for sore eyes. Your good deed is already being rewarded."

Ryan's gaze shifted toward the doorway where, indeed, the sight that greeted him was a blessing. A woman that beautiful could improve a man's mood in the blink of an eye. Huge eyes peered around the pub's shadowy interior. Pale, fine skin had been stung pink by the wind. Waves of thick, auburn curls tumbled in disarray to her shoulders. Slender legs, encased in denim and high leather boots, were the inspiration for a man's most erotic fantasies. Ryan sighed with pleasure.

"Boy, where are your manners?" Father Francis scolded. "She's a paying customer who's obviously new to Ryan's Place. Go welcome her."

Casting a sour look at the meddling old man, Ryan crossed to the other end of the crowded bar. "Can I help you, miss?"

"I doubt it," she said grimly. "I doubt all the saints in heaven can solve this one."

Ryan chuckled. "How about a bartender and a cranky old priest? Will we do? Or is there someone you're supposed to be meeting here? I know most of the regulars."

"No, I'm not meeting anyone, but I'd certainly like an introduction to someone who can fix a flat. I've called every garage in a ten-mile radius. Not a one of them has road service tonight. They all point out that tomorrow's Thanksgiving, as if I didn't know that. I have a car loaded with food, thank you very much, and given the way I hate to cook, I flatly refuse to let it all spoil while I'm stuck here. Of course, since the temperature is below freezing, I'm sure I'll have blocks of ice by the time I finally get home."

Ryan wisely bit back another chuckle. "Do you have a spare tire?"

The look she shot him was lethal. "Of course I have a spare. One of those cute little doughnut things. Don't you think I tried that? I'm not totally helpless."

"Well, then?"

"It's flat, too. What good is the darn thing if it's going to be flat when you need it most?"

Ryan decided not to remind her that it probably needed to be checked once in a while to avoid precisely this kind of situation. She didn't seem to be in the mood for such obviously belated advice.

"How about this?" he suggested. "Have a seat down here by Father Francis. I'll get you something to drink that will warm you up, and we'll discuss the best way to go about solving your problem."

"I don't have time to sit around." She regarded the priest apologetically. "No offense, Father, but I was supposed to be at my parents' house hours ago. I'm sure they're getting frantic."

"Did you-"

She frowned at him and cut him off. "Before you say it, of course I've called. They know what's going on, but you don't know my parents. Until I actually walk in the door, they'll be frantic anyway. It's what they do. They worry. Big things, little things-it doesn't matter. They claim their right to worry about their children came with the birth certificates."

Ryan had a lot of trouble relating to frantic parents. His own hadn't given two hoots about him or his brothers. When he was nine they'd dumped the three oldest boys on the state, then vanished, taking the two-year-old twins with them. If there had been an explanation for their cavalier treatment of their sons, they hadn't bothered to share it with Ryan or his brothers.

He could still remember the last time he'd seen seven-year-old Sean, crying his eyes out as he was led away by a social worker. Michael, two years younger, had been braver by far…or perhaps at five he hadn't really understood what was happening to them. They'd never seen each other or their parents again.

Most of the time, Ryan kept those memories securely locked away, but every once in a while they crept out to haunt him…most often around holidays. It was yet another reason to despise the occasions when anyone without family felt even more alone than usual.

"You're closing in an hour or so, aren't you, Ryan?" Father Francis asked, snapping him out of his dark thoughts. There was a gleam in the old man's eyes when he added, "Perhaps you could give the young lady a lift home."

Before Ryan could list all the reasons why that was a lousy idea, a pair of sea-green eyes latched on to him. "Could you? I know it's an imposition. I'm sure you have your own Thanksgiving plans, but I truly am desperate."

"What about a cab? I'd be happy to call one, and you'd be home in no time."

"I tried," she said. "It's a long trip, and a lot of the drivers have gone home because of the holiday. There aren't a lot of people out and about. Most are home with their families. Both companies I called turned me down."

"Ryan, my boy, if ever there was a lady in distress, it would seem to be this young woman. Surely you won't be saying no to such a simple thing," Father Francis said.

"I'm a stranger," Ryan pointed out. He scowled at her. "Don't you know you should never accept a ride with a stranger?"

Father Francis chuckled. "I think she can take the word of the priest that you're a positive gentleman. As for the rest, Ryan Devaney, this is…?" He glanced at the young woman and waited.

"Maggie O'Brien," she said.

A beaming smile spread across the priest's face. "Ah, a fine Irish lass, is it? Ryan, you can't possibly think of turning down a fellow countryman."

Ryan suspected Maggie had spent even less time in the Emerald Isle than he had on his ventures to learn the art of running a successful Irish pub. She sounded very much like a Boston native.

"I think we can probably agree that Ms. O'Brien and I are, indeed, fellow Americans," he said wryly.

"But you carry the blood of your Irish ancestors," the priest insisted. "And a true and loyal Irishman never forgets his roots."

"Whatever," Ryan replied, knowing that for the second time tonight he might as well give in to the inevitable. "Ms. O'Brien, I'll be happy to give you a lift if you can wait till I close in an hour. In the meantime I'll give you the keys to my car. You can transfer all that food you're carrying to it." He shot a pointed look at the priest. "Father Francis will be happy to help, won't you, Father?"

"It will be my pleasure," the priest said, bouncing to his feet with more alacrity than he'd shown in the past ten years.

"Ms. O'Brien," Ryan called after them as they headed for the door. "Whatever you do, don't listen to a word he says about me."

"I always sing your praises," Father Francis retorted with a hint of indignation. "By the time I've said my piece, she'll be thinking you were sent here by angels."

"That's exactly what I'm afraid of," Ryan said. For some reason he had a very bad feeling about this Maggie O'Brien getting the idea, even for a second, that he was any sort of saint.

Users Review

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Michael Naylor:

Here thing why this kind of The Devaney Brothers: Ryan and Sean: Ryan's PlaceSean's Reckoning (The Devaneys) are different and trusted to be yours. First of all looking at a book is good but it really depends in the content of it which is the content is as yummy as food or not. The Devaney Brothers: Ryan and Sean: Ryan's PlaceSean's Reckoning (The Devaneys) giving you information deeper and different ways, you can find any publication out there but there is no reserve that similar with The Devaney Brothers: Ryan and Sean: Ryan's PlaceSean's Reckoning (The Devaneys). It gives you thrill examining journey, its open up your eyes about the thing that happened in the world which is maybe can be happened around you. It is easy to bring everywhere like in playground, café, or even in your technique home by train. For anyone who is having difficulties in bringing the paper book maybe the form of The Devaney Brothers: Ryan and Sean: Ryan's PlaceSean's Reckoning (The Devaneys) in e-book can be your substitute.

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