

Sweet Will Of God By Scribblesinink

Raymond Singleton & Olivia Dunne, 1944. Ray finished writing the last digit and put down the pen. Waiting for the ink to dry, so he could close the book without smudging the new entry, he perused the list of marriages. For the longest time, he'd despaired he'd ever write his own name in the register, below those of his sister and parents and grandparents. With Daniel gone, it had appeared he'd be the last Singleton of his line, but now....

His thoughts drifted to the woman in his parents' old bedroom. He'd heard her come up a few minutes before, her footsteps briefly hesitating at the top of the landing before they carried on.

His wife....

He'd told Livvy true: when Reverend Case had come out and informed him of her situation, it had seemed to Ray that this had been God's plan all along. He hadn't needed to think for very long before telling the reverend that, yes, he'd marry Miss Dunne.

He had not expected her to be such a fine woman, though, despite knowing a little of her history. While she had expressed worry whether he'd be able to love the baby, Ray feared she might never feel at home at the farm. She was too refined to have mentioned anything, but he'd caught the look of horror that had crossed her face as she'd first entered the house. And, much to his dismay, not even the indoor plumbing he'd finished putting in a few days before she arrived had put a smile on her face.

Had he made a mistake? Had his desire for a wife, for an heir—even one not of his blood—blinded him? Might Livvy have been better off had she stayed in Denver, even as an unmarried mother. It wasn't what her father had wanted, but at least she'd be with her own people, and she could've given up the baby for adoption, maybe....

Ray sighed. He closed the heavy book. *What's done is done*, his mother always used to say. And nothing he did or said would change that.

Pulling open the drawer where he kept the things that reminded him of his family's history to put the book away, his gaze fell on the watch that also lay there for safekeeping. His father's watch, that he'd only ever carried Sundays.

Without really thinking about what he was doing, Ray put the book atop the dresser and lifted out the watch. He wound it up, his calloused fingers slipping a little on the small

knob. The sudden ticking seemed loud in the quiet of the bunk room, and the sound reminded him of peaceful winter Sundays, long ago. His father would doze in his armchair by the fire, or discuss his plans for next year's planting with Ray, while Daniel played with his blocks, and delicious smells of cooking drifted from the kitchen, where his mother and Martha prepared dinner.

Ray heaved another deep breath, and placed the watch back where he'd found it. He shut the drawer, cutting off the *tick-tick* of seconds passing. He'd just have to try his best to be as good husband for Livvy as his father had been to his mother. He only hoped he'd measure up to the task....

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