
WHERE SHE BELONGS

A Destiny Falls Novel

Cindy Procter-King

Published by

Blue Orchard Books

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Where She Belongs (Destiny Falls Book 1)

Where She Belongs Publishing History:

December 2012 Blue Orchard Books – eBook and Trade Paperback

March 2012 AudioLark – Audiobook

December 2011 Five Where She Belongs (Destiny Falls Book 1) Star/Cengage/Gale – Library-edition hardcover

Cover by The Killion Group

Formatting by Hale Author Services

About this Story

She never wants to go home again.

For Jess Morgan, Destiny Falls holds too many Where She Belongs (Destiny Falls Book 1) painful memories. Nine years ago, a logging accident near the remote timber town killed her dad

and her high school sweetheart. To make matters worse, her mother quickly sought comfort with another man. That choice tore Jess apart and drove her to *Where She Belongs* (Destiny Falls Book 1) seek a life far away. But now fate steps in, and family obligations force her return home. Before long, she's convinced that persuading her mom to live with her in Toronto will repair their shattered bond. *Where She Belongs* (Destiny Falls Book 1) However, she doesn't count on a long-ago friend re-entering her life and challenging her convictions.

Rugged forester Adam Wright believes in family, roots, and not running from heartache. Now, all he wants is to help Jess break down the walls of the lonely sanctuary she's built for herself and heal her past hurts. It's not until she rejects his plans for their future that he realizes his persistence is *Where She Belongs* (Destiny Falls Book 1) pushing her away—not at all what he intends.

Has he lost his chance? Or can he convince Jess that where she truly belongs is with him... forever?

In memory of Andy, brother of my heart. Taken too soon.

June 1, Where She Belongs (Destiny Falls Book 1) 1956 — July 22, 1981

Chapter One

JESS MORGAN SCANNED the arrivals area of the small British Columbia airport. Her best friend was supposed to have met her at the luggage carousel thirty minutes ago. Granted, Jess hadn't visited *Where She Belongs* (Destiny Falls Book 1) in ages, but it wasn't like Molly Davis to be late.

Especially under *these* circumstances. Pete's heart attack. *Where She Belongs* (Destiny Falls Book 1) The funeral. *Where She Belongs* (Destiny Falls Book 1) Jess's mother left alone to deal with both.

A headache battered Jess's temples as the exhaustion of the cross-country flight fell over her. Heels tapping, she wheeled her suitcase to a kiosk advertising North Thompson Valley attractions: whitewater rafting, helicopter skiing, and hiking and camping at majestic Destiny Falls, a few kilometers north of her hometown bearing the same name.

And a far cry from her life in Toronto.

Toto, I don't think we're in Kansas anymore. Destiny Falls hadn't felt like home in years.

Heart *Where She Belongs* (Destiny Falls Book 1) squeezing, she released the suitcase handle and set down her carry-on. She *Where She Belongs* (Destiny Falls Book 1) retrieved her cell phone from her purse. *Damn it. Dead battery.*

Slipping the *Where She Belongs* (Destiny Falls Book 1) cell into her coat pocket, she scanned

the Kamloops airport for a pay phone. A flight announcement blared over the loudspeakers. Nearby, *Where She Belongs* (Destiny Falls Book 1) a young mother fussed with a baby in a stroller while two little boys with her kissed their father goodbye.

The picture of the cozy family stirred old longings inside Jess. Had she stayed in Destiny Falls—had fate not stolen the option—she could have been that woman, in love and knee-deep in diapers. And not wanting it any other way.

Behind the young family, a phone stand beckoned. Shaking off bad memories, Jess grabbed her carry-on. A man in his early thirties jogged up, his dark blond hair buffeted by the chilly March breeze she'd felt coming off the plane.

“Jess?”

“Yes?” Well-worn jeans hugged his lean hips, and *Where She Belongs* (Destiny Falls Book 1) an ivory cotton shirt peeked from his unbuttoned jean jacket. Tall, broad-shouldered, with a square jaw and angular features, he looked familiar, but she couldn't place him. A crooked white scar bisected his right eyebrow, drawing *Where She Belongs* (Destiny Falls Book 1) her attention to his light blue eyes.

Wait a minute. “Adam?” She blinked. Amazing. She hadn't seen him in thirteen, no, nearly fourteen years, considering her rapidly approaching twenty-eighth birthday.

Memories flooded her mind from those few carefree summer weeks a lifetime ago. Adam had been visiting his aunt and uncle's farm in Destiny Falls. The object of her first older-guy crush, he'd ignored her.

How old had he been then? Seventeen. Which placed him at thirty-one now.

His scar held the same rugged appeal as when he'd been seventeen.

“Yeah, that's right. Adam Wright.” His faded-denim gaze flicked over her. A faint buzzing spread through her—darn jet lag. “Molly sent me *Where She Belongs* (Destiny Falls Book 1) to get you.”

“Oh? I was about to call her. Is she in the car?”

Where She Belongs (Destiny Falls Book 1)

“No, I'm your ride.”

Jess frowned. Adam had lived in Kamloops the summer they'd met, but she knew from Molly's emails that he'd moved to Destiny Falls several years ago. Why would he make *Where She Belongs* (Destiny Falls Book 1) the ninety-minute drive down the winding country highway when last night she'd arranged her ride with Molly?

Her stomach pitched. “What's wrong?”

Where She Belongs (Destiny Falls Book 1)

He pushed a hand into a front jeans pocket. “Molly stopped by your mother’s place on her way down here, then decided she should stay in Destiny Falls and keep Nora company. So she asked if I’d mind coming. Sorry I’m late, but I left as soon as she called.”

A reasonable explanation—except *Where She Belongs* (Destiny Falls Book 1) Jess’s mother was very guarded. She held her grief close to her, sharing it with no one. That was how she’d dealt with Jess’s father’s death and with every other crisis in her life.

Lines of discomfort bracketed Adam’s mouth. “Molly doesn’t want you worrying about your mom. It’ll be after ten when we get back, and she didn’t think Nora *Where She Belongs* (Destiny Falls Book 1) should have to wait up for you without someone there to help her pass the time.”

Jess nodded. Her mother usually went to bed at nine. And it would be like Molly to take stock of a situation and do what she deemed best—whether the recipient of her good intentions wanted her to *Where She Belongs* (Destiny Falls Book 1) or not.

“How is *Where She Belongs* (Destiny Falls Book 1) my mother? Did Molly say?”

“Pete’s heart attack came *Where She Belongs* (Destiny Falls Book 1) without warning, Jess. It caught your mother by surprise. She talked about you at the funeral on Monday, said she’d left you a message.”

Jess shifted on her new Italian leather pumps. A hint of censure shadowed Adam’s gaze, mirroring her thoughts of the last twenty-four hours. She should have been here for her mother. Instead of dashing around the shoe shows in Europe, gathering ideas for her upcoming buying trip, she should have been in Destiny Falls, helping Mom get through Pete’s funeral.

“I was overseas on business.” Her need to explain herself rankled. She loved her mother, but they weren’t Norman Rockwell material, and they never truly had been. Especially not since Jess’s father had died and Pete had entered the picture. “I only *Where She Belongs* (Destiny Falls Book 1) returned to Toronto yesterday.”

“Too bad she couldn’t reach your cell or email.”

“She didn’t try.” Her mother didn’t have the number or Jess’s email address, or any business contact info. Her poor mom had been forced to leave a message on the home answering machine in Jess’s empty apartment.

“Yeah, well, it was a nice service. I’ve never seen that little church crammed so full. Everyone in town knew Pete.”

“You went?” Jess picked up her carry-on. As far *Where She Belongs* (Destiny Falls Book 1) as she knew, Adam wasn’t well acquainted with her mom. But of course everyone in Destiny Falls knew Pete. He was—*had been*—the manager of the sole supermarket in the area.

Adam nodded, reaching for her bag. His woody scent drifted to her. “Let me get your luggage.” Voice low, he slid the carry-on from her grasp.

Jess drew away swiftly, nerves humming. Her purse strap slid down her arm, and she dragged it back up. “Thanks.” She wouldn’t argue. She’d spent most of the last two days on planes. She just wanted to get there already.

He wheeled her suitcase toward the exit. “My dog’s in the truck. Hope you don’t mind. She was alone a lot today, so I didn’t want to leave *Where She Belongs* (Destiny Falls Book 1) her. She rides in back and won’t bother you.”

“Um, that’s okay.” Was Adam married? Nearly everyone in Destiny Falls was.

She glanced at his hand. He didn’t wear a ring, and Molly had never mentioned a wife or kids. But he looked like a family man, strong and capable, handsome, tall.

She rolled her eyes. *Get a grip, Jess.* What did it matter if the man had eight wives? After tonight, she wouldn’t see him again. She hadn’t visited Destiny Falls since her bitter argument with Pete four Christmases ago. She had just a few days off work, postponing several meetings to make it happen.

While she was here, her only concern was for Mom.

The headlights of Adam’s big SUV illuminated the dirt driveway leading to the farmhouse Jess’s grandfather had built. Her hand tensed on the armrest as she struggled to contain the mixed surge of anxiety and homecoming that always assaulted her at this point. The time away hadn’t mellowed her conflicting emotions. And the long drive with Adam hadn’t helped.

Initially, they’d exchanged idle small talk about the weather and changes in the valley. But his subtle disapproval of her—for what, missing Pete’s funeral?—had worsened her tendency to withdraw when jet-lagged.

Eventually, he’d focused on driving while she’d stared out the passenger window, fervently wishing Molly had picked her up.

He parked next to Molly’s red family sedan. “We’re here.”

“Thanks. I appreciate the ride.”

He slid her a glance. “No problem.”

Right. She unbuckled her seatbelt. As she retrieved her purse, he opened her door. Not wanting to insult him, she accepted *Where She Belongs* (Destiny Falls Book 1) his help climbing out of the truck.

Where She Belongs (Destiny Falls Book 1)

"I'll get your suitcase." His deep voice sounded tight.

Conscious of his assessing gaze and the warm, rough texture of his large hand, she sidestepped him, mumbling another thank-you.

Turning, she faced the house she'd grown up in, where she'd once dreamed of Danny and babies and building a life in Destiny Falls. Her breath caught. Little had changed in four years. Fresh paint livened up the place, but *Where She Belongs (Destiny Falls Book 1)* it was still the same buttercup yellow with glossy white trim. A light shone at the side entrance, another on the front porch. A crescent moon glimmered above the forested mountains in a cloudless, star-studded sky.

The late-March breeze swirled her coat around her legs. Adam stepped beside her, carrying the luggage. "Ready?"

No.

But she couldn't explain her ambivalent feelings to this man she barely knew. Instead, she asked, "Do you want to let out your dog?"

He shook his head. "Sheba's okay in the cargo hold for now. I'm not staying long, anyway."

Good. He made her nervous.

She headed to the side door, and he followed her in. She hung her coat on the row of pegs in the small mudroom.

"Mom?" She smoothed her knit dress, releasing static that had accumulated in the SUV. "Mom? Are you down here? Molly?"

No answer. "They must be upstairs," she murmured.

She entered the kitchen and set her purse on the antique pine trestle table. On the maple buffet banking the rear wall, sympathy cards and fading bouquets flanked a small bowl of potpourri. The scents of cinnamon and dried orange blossoms lifted into the air.

Where She Belongs Destiny Falls Book 1

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