



Christmas in Destiny Preview

Snow had just begun to fall as Shane Dalton sprinkled his father's ashes over a stark, lonely little pond on a farm outside Mansfield, Ohio. His father's childhood home, and "a place where I was happy," his dad had said just before his death last month. "And there weren't many of those."

Shane stood looking around the area – thinking about his father's life, and his own. They'd both made a lot of mistakes. And he'd probably make some more – after all, he was only thirty-four.

He'd been born near here, raised here until he was nine – but he'd never been back. Never had a reason to come. And while one part of him thought maybe he should linger a little, take a look around ... the rest of him thought: Nah, waste of time. A brisk gust of wintry wind sliced through him, confirming the decision.

Next stop: Miami. Fast cars, fast women, and the first Christmas he'd spend not surrounded by Montana snow. He'd never liked Christmas anyway – so a few lights hung up in palm trees would suit him just fine.

There was a job waiting for him. Though he wasn't sure exactly what it was – he had only an address and a phone number. A guy named Donnie V. was going to hook him up – a friend of a

friend of a friend. All he knew was the money sounded good. And the fast cars and fast women didn't sound bad, either.

Climbing back behind the wheel of his Chevy pickup, he set the GPS on his cell phone for Miami, ready to start the next leg of his cross-country road trip to a new life. He'd spent a long time heading east, but now it was finally time to turn south.

Though as he was about to put the truck in Drive, he stopped. Thought a minute. Picked the phone back up.

Despite himself, he keyed in the name of the place his father had muttered only a moment before he'd passed away. "Go there after Mansfield," he'd mumbled to Shane. "Something there for you."

"What? What's there for me?"

Yet he hadn't been able to pull any more from his dad on the topic before, seconds later, his father's eyes had closed for the last time. He'd decided it was the ramblings of a man out of his head on pain medication.

And yet the words had stayed with him. *Something there for you.*

What the hell could that mean?

Hitting the search button, he found that a town by that name actually existed – and lay only a couple hours away. *Well, I'll be damned.*

Kind of out in the middle of nowhere, but when would he ever pass this way again?

So ... maybe he should make a quick side trip before it got dark. Just to check the place out. See if he could figure out what his dad had been talking about. If it had even meant anything at all.

It wouldn't take long. Then he'd be back on the road to sun and fun and money, three things he'd never had quite enough of.

Phone still in hand, he changed the destination on his GPS once more – to Destiny, Ohio.

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