



## Destiny's Purpose

**Shannon Cassidy-Rouleau**

**Dennis Auth, Illustrator**

Big Tent Books

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*Destiny's Purpose* is a picture book that admirably uses the story of an outsider animal to educate readers about alpacas and an auto-immune condition in order to elicit their empathy for those who are different.

Alpacas are prized for their fleece and young Destiny seems destined for greatness because he grows enviable fleece on the alpaca farm where he lives. The farmer and his wife have big plans for Destiny, certain that he will win them prizes at alpaca shows. However, when it becomes clear that Destiny has alopecia which causes his fleece to fall out, his greatness comes into question.

The farmer's wife sees a hidden blessing in Destiny's change in fortune: "Destiny has another purpose." The other alpacas are not convinced of this and the once-loved Destiny becomes an outcast and subject to bullying once his fleece begins to fall out. After a courageous act, Destiny is once again accepted into the fold despite his hair-challenged appearance.

Shannon Cassidy-Rouleau, a teacher of elementary and special education, knows about the shock of having to deal with alopecia since she herself has the condition. She also knows about the lives of alpacas since she raises them on a farm with her family. She was inspired to use her own situation to write this book to help children dealing with alopecia. A portion of book sales will go to the National Alopecia Areata Foundation.

Cassidy-Rouleau has skillfully used her teaching background and knowledge of educational texts for children to create this book. At the end of the story, there is an "About Alpacas" section that includes basic information on the animals, along with pictures. Following that, there is an "About Alopecia" section and a glossary. With one exception, words that are highlighted in the text are defined in the glossary, a feature that is useful whether the book is used in a school setting or at home. Since the author is Canadian, parents in the US will want to point out the differences in the spelling of words like fibre (fiber). There is also a teacher's guide available online.

Overall, *Destiny's Purpose* is an old-fashioned sort of picture book with commendable illustrations that will educate adults and children alike.

JADA BRADLEY (March 10, 2011)

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