



## The Impossible Destiny of Cutie Grackle

**Shawn K. Stout**

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A ten-year-old girl seeks to break a long curse on her family in Shawn K. Stout's novel *The Impossible Destiny of Cutie Grackle*.

Cutie lives with her uncle, Horace, in West Virginia, where she struggles to find her next meal and mourns the loss of her parents, who disappeared when she was a baby. For nearly thirty years, each Rose Moon—a full moon on the summer solstice—a loved one of Horace's has been taken from him—his grandmother, his mother, and his sister, Cutie's mother, Magda. As another Rose Moon approaches, a group of ravens begins to follow Cutie around town; when they give her a note that prophesies her ability to end the curse before another person is taken, she teams up with a new friend, Galen, to investigate the ravens and fulfill her destiny.

Cutie is strong, brave, and humble. She feels guilty when she must steal food to survive, and she's concerned for the well-being of others in balance with concern for herself. She and Galen (who's prone to storytelling, is snarky, and was born with a limb difference that requires surgery) are an appealing duo as they adventure through the woods, following clues from the ravens. They're both skeptical of the fantastic nature of their mission and are willing to "believe impossible things." Meanwhile, the winding mountain forest and the small town they live in are vivified with cultural details.

Navigating sensitive topics like unequal food access, disabilities, and the loss of one's parents, the approachable adventure novel *The Impossible Destiny of Cutie Grackle* conveys empathy for both people and nature.

AIMEE JODOIN (May / June 2022)

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