

Destiny

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In *Destiny* the reader is taken from Haver, a village in Michigan's eastern Upper Peninsula near Sault Ste. Marie, across the country to the Southwest's arid regions. It's there that 16-year-old Sally Girl realizes her destiny when she confronts the truth about her mother and her mother's family.

"There's a saying about looking through someone else's eyes," Lanning said, "that applies to Sally Girl when she sees where her mother grew up. Finally, she begins to understand her heritage. It's a pivotal moment in the discovery process.

"That's a good example of a character working through a problem," Lanning explained. "Throw in a crisis and watch how the character handles adversity. It's very telling. Character development is a fascinating process when it covers three books. In a single novel the reader sees character growth more quickly. In a trilogy or a series it's a longer process with more opportunities to display growth. In addition, some characters are written out and others are added, depending on the plot."

In Lanning's first two novels, the plot strands are deeply interwoven by a complex cast of characters. In this adventurous third novel, some plot elements are simplified. "Generally, they form a natural progression in a character's life," Lanning said. "They are also a result of what would be predictable for that person to do based on personality and background which both play a key role in the way a person sees the world and how they react to adverse conditions."

Lanning, who formed her own publishing company—Potagannissing Bay Publishing—is always asked where her characters come from. "They come from what I see and hear and remember, and what I have read over the years, and in a limited sense, my life experiences. I will have to add to that, the bits and pieces of people from the past who run around in my head.

"I also like a delicate balance of the different elements: characterization, dialogue (the way people really talk) action, and descriptive passages. All are vital to the success of a novel, but too much of one or the other doesn't work. It must be balanced."

Lanning talked about the difficulty in writing a trilogy. "If a person has not read the first book in the trilogy, *Rapunzel's Window*, and begins with the second book, *Quest* they do not know the plot or the characters' backgrounds from the first book. As an author, I have to give that reader an abbreviated version of facts from the first book. Conversely, if the reader has read the first book, I must write in such a way that I don't bore the reader by repeating something they already know. It's a fine line to

walk, and it took a lot of coordination between me and my extremely capable editor, Erin Howarth.”

About *Destiny*, the last book in the trilogy, Lanning said, “It’s important to tie up loose ends so the reader isn’t left up in the air, unfulfilled. I don’t care for books that end abruptly with nothing resolved. Ideally the author should take the reader just so far and then wrap it up. In this way the author leaves them visualizing the characters’ futures and how the story might continue. After all, situations in life don’t always end neatly.”

Lanning began writing when she was six years old. She moved from a simple play about Christmas to poetry and short stories. As she grew she expanded to non-fiction, humor pieces and a series of food articles in the *Arizona Magazine*. She wrote a humor column and news and features for the *Weekly Herald* in Universal City, Texas where she was Women’s Editor. In Fayetteville, North Carolina she wrote copy and news stories for WFLB-TV, and in Kansas City, Missouri she wrote copy for WHB Radio.

She returned to college, graduated and got her teaching degree. She wrote specialized writing instruction material and transcribed movie scripts for eighth graders at Ironwood Elementary School in Phoenix, Arizona. At Desert Foothills Junior High School in Phoenix she taught writing and journalism for 23 years. “I had to adapt the journalism curriculum from high school to suit my eighth graders and their monthly newspaper, “The Sting.”

In each issue a page was devoted to the *Articulate Arachnid*, the literary magazine featuring art, games and poetry.

When Lanning retired from teaching she moved to Drummond Island where she finally had time to fulfill her dream of writing a novel.

“I always pictured myself in a cabin in the woods writing on my little Olivetti portable. Can you imagine how long it would have taken me? I retired the portable and thanks to computers, I can type as fast as I think.”

When asked about a possible fourth novel, Lanning said, “I already have a plot and some principal characters in mind. It will be more current than the “*Rapunzel Trilogy*”. I may take some time off after the work on *Destiny*. Just because the book is at the printers, doesn’t mean my work is finished. I write the copy for the back of the book, list the characters for the back of the bookmark, write copy for my website and write promotional material publicizing the book to be sent to the media.”

All three books will be available at most stores on Drummond Island, DeTour, Cedarville, Pickford, and the Soo. You may order them by email: pbpub@alphacomm.net, or online at www.potagannissingbaypublishing.com, or P.O. Box 218, Drummond Island, MI, 49726.