

**BOOK TOUR**

September 4th - September 10th

#Disabled #Elementary Teachers  
#Childrens Librarians #KidLit



# Why Me, Mama?

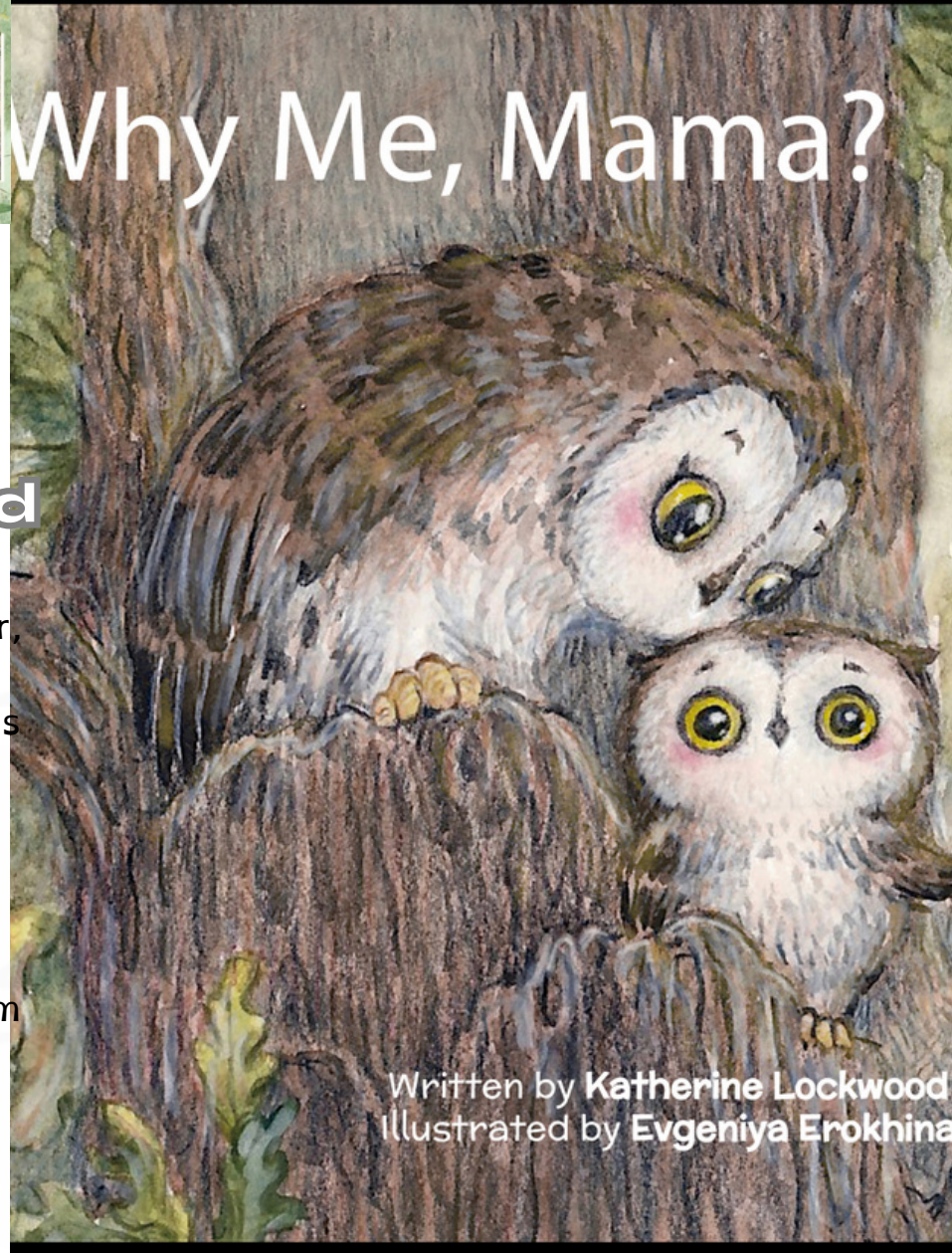
## Author Interview

**Katherine Lockwood**

"Katherine Lockwood is an award winning Author, Advocate, Educator, and Therapist! She is also the momma to sweet Rose with Moebius Syndrome and Maggie. Katherine is on a mission to "tackle bullying through teaching people empathy, Self Advocacy and Perspective."

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Written by Katherine Lockwood  
Illustrated by Evgeniya Erokhina



**Liz:** Hey Dandy Family! This book is incredible. My entire family was enthralled and we honestly could not take our eyes off of each and every word and illustration... The words and the art of the book match so perfectly! Together, the combination of the written-art and the illustrated-art help the reader feel as if they too, were a part of this magical community of "exceptional animal-tot-hood... where creating beautiful friendships that are accepting and inclusive is the common sense thing to do..."

Interview Questions Written By: Elizabeth Mobley  
September 9, 2023 The Dandiest Life LLC - All Rights Reserved



**Liz:** So... As a fellow educator, mom, person with disabilities and mother of children with medical complexities and disabilities... I hope these questions find you well and that they continue the beautiful conversations you have started in public forums with this fabulous book! Thank you for your time!

Writing can feel fun for some and daunting for others... May I ask where you feel you fall on the “author's continuum” of creative expression and how were you able to settle on this particular book theme and journey? Like... What made you pick these woodland creatures... They were stunning! and How did you connect with your illustrator, Evgeniya Erokhina?



**Katherine:** One of the coolest pieces about *Why Me, Mama?* is that each character was inspired by a real child. Each child who is in the book got to pick a woodland animal to represent them and they got to choose one of their own differences for the animal to have. Each family worked closely with the illustrator, sending information about their personality and pictures. You can see each characters' bio here: <https://www.acorncottagepress.com/all-the-animals.html#/> I connected with Evgeniya on Upwork after posting a job listing and hiring several illustrators to create an owl. Seeing Evgeniya's illustration of an owl - I was smitten with its beauty and nostalgic appeal.

I don't really identify with being an author, at least not yet. I'm a disability advocate :)

**Liz:** As a mother of three (children) and all with complex needs, I have often felt the high pressure to initiate the cultivation of “safe spaces.” I was led to create these safe spaces for not only my children but others as well... What I never thought to do was help my children be proactive in starting the conversation around creating what the safe space needed... not just for themselves, but also for their friends! How did this idea come to you?



**Katherine:** When we left the NICU in August of 2020, we arrived home with an NG feeding tube, a couple diagnoses we had never heard of, a bazillion specialist appointments, and so many unanswered questions. I searched for resources - for books to help Rose understand her differences but also to learn that even within a group, you are not all the same. I came up empty. Due to my own identity being disabled, I knew first hand what it felt like to be different but not the same as others who have the same diagnosis and that nuance is important. I created Why Me, Mama? to have additional layers that may not be initially visible. The spread where Rose asks Ryan the coyote if she needs help addresses how sometimes people “jump in” to assist the disabled when they don’t need help and the importance of asking before helping. Another example is the spread with the animals fishing - it is a light touch of an example of assistive technology as each animal on the page struggles to eat typically with

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"Oh, I almost forgot to give you your invitations to my birthday party. I am going to have a big cake!"  
"I can't have cake because I use a feeding tube to eat,"  
woofed Rafael. "But I'll be there. I love parties!"  
"That sounds great," said Daisy.



Liz: I'm also a licensed educator... Special education, specifically... lol... Similarly to you, I am also a mother with a disability... how do you navigate the intersectionality of these vastly different yet very nuanced "roles?"

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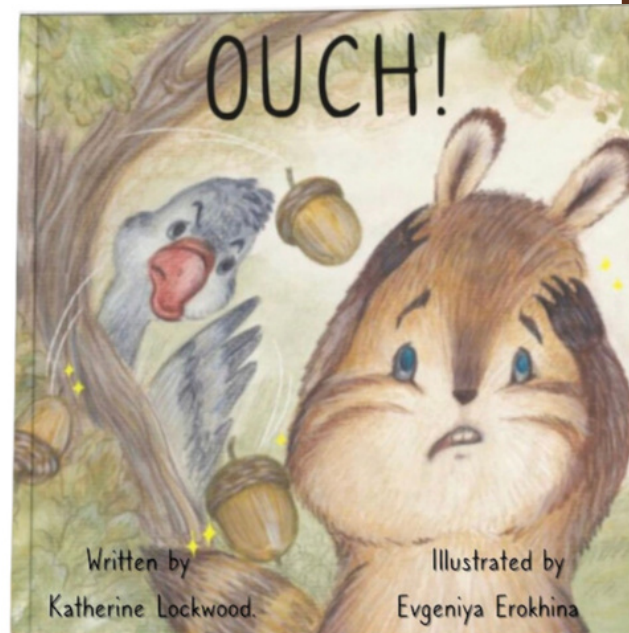
Katherine: I believe that everyone has strengths and weaknesses and our work is to find the intersection between what we are good at and what we are passionate about. When I graduated college with a degree in public relations originally, I only applied to non profit positions and took a job as a disability advocate. There I learned so much about disability rights and social services before moving on to teach Special Education through Teach for America and later went into School Counseling and working as a Therapist. We are raising our children in an imperfect system where we unfortunately cannot trust society to treat us well. Having lived experience helped put me in a place where I can truly support both children with disabilities and their families by serving as positive disability representation, teaching self advocacy, assisting with navigating systems, and connecting around shared experiences.

Liz: So... To be a Nautilus Book Awards Winner is pretty Epic!  
How did winning this award inspire or impact you? What  
decisions does one make after winning such an award,  
professional!?



Katherine: I am learning so much about writing and publishing!  
Considering traditional publishing versus Indie publishing and the  
lack of disability in publishing overall. Did you know that only 3.4%  
of characters in Kid Lit have disabilities? Compare that to 26% of  
people identifying as disabled. Here's an awesome article about this  
by Margaret Kingsbury in [Book Riot](#). Creating Why Me, Mama? I  
didn't even think about traditional publishing. My priority was to  
depict disability authentically and beautifully - and I was concerned  
that traditional wouldn't have the same priorities. Applying for  
Awards, It was important to me that Why Me, Mama? Could  
compete with traditionally published picture books. I go into book  
shops to see if they would like to consider carrying it and they try  
to ring me up at the register - a true compliment. I am proud to say  
that Why Me, Mama? Has earned a Silver Nautilus as well as a  
Bronze Moonbean and a Silver Independent Publishing Award.

**Liz:** This book has been a very intriguing one for our family!, especially for my kiddos... I mean, a book full of tots... well... I mean tots of the animal kingdom... By the end of the book, my kids were super excited to ask more questions about each other and they were proud and brave. It was super inspiring. Thanks to your book, my daughter is very proud of her G-Tube site. She draws a feeding tube G-Tube button on all of her scribble pets now!\* Do you plan to make this into a series?! It's phenomenal! because when you hear that this story helped make a kid and her big sister proud of her feeding tube site and simultaneously learn how to encourage and support each other and build confidence... That



is epic!

**Katherine:** When I wrote *Why Me, Mama?* I only planned on it being one book. Now that it exists and I have had the opportunity to hear from many families with disabilities who are excited and comforted by this representation - I have decided to turn it into a series.

My next project is *OUCH! OOPS! OH NO!* And it is currently LIVE on Kickstarter right now until Sept 21 - click to see my video and check it out -

<http://kck.st/3OSet0B>. If you aren't familiar with Kickstarter, it is a crowdfunding site where you can back projects you feel passionate about and you receive rewards once the project is complete - the main reward for my project is the book set of *OUCH! OOPS! OH NO!* The goal is all or nothing and every little bit helps! :)

*Ouch! Oops! Oh No!* tells the story of how Harrison is bullied but from the perspectives of the Bullied, the Bully, and the Bystander. Each story can be read individually, but when read as a complete set, children can roleplay the different roles and truly understand the different perspectives of all of the characters within the story. As a set, these books are powerful because they introduce all of these different perspectives for children to explore and develop empathy for those being bullied, the bully themselves, and the bystander -- all roles each child will play in real life.

A great resource in case you aren't already familiar - is Tubie friends. They will send you a stuffie with matching equipment. I also have a line of disability empowerment stickers on Etsy that are positive and punny...

<https://www.acorncottagepress.com/>

**\*\*Follow Katherine on socials and website for links to her Etsy!\*\***

**Liz:** What are some of the greatest lessons you have learned by being a disabled mother, who is also an educator that is raising a child with disabilities and/or Medical complexities? What would you say to the disabled person or parent who feels their life or child's life is limited because of a disability?

**Katherine:** I have found that the most supportive people are those that are also experiencing similar struggles. When we have been in the NICU, or had surgery - the people that showed up for us were generally those who also experience medical challenges in their own families. The people who have the least amount of time and resources are the ones that always showed up - they understand how much it matters!



**Katherine:** Our immediate families are incredibly supportive and we are so grateful. The biggest thing is how well we are fed. Are you questioning how you can help someone, feed them well! It is so tiring to go to appointments, the lack of sleep worrying, the driving, the additional costs. Feed me! I don't have the mental space to grocery shop and cook. I don't think people understand how much it takes to coordinate care and insurance and prescriptions. It's dealing with pharmacies that breaks me. I have to coordinate with 5 different pharmacies - insurance requires specialty pharmacies for different medications and they only allow 30 day prescriptions. Every time I go to pick something up, something isn't right. They need something additional from a doctor or insurance. I try to think of it as a game - it truly feels like they are trying to make it difficult to get necessary things. Sometimes I just sit in the car and cry. Sometimes your body needs the release.

Liz: You are a fabulous writer. I feel like to be a writer that writes with the intention of providing community, comfort, and that access to new information is a rarity. When I say access... it's as if you wrote with the intention of accessing the hearts and minds of every reader— to help them understand that these differences within the world of disability/ being different is where the true beauty lies in life. Being Unique and Different are what make us beautiful and exciting and provide life a sense of WONDER- and make it WONDER-full ✨ especially when we fill our lives with goodness and good people... please speak and share your thoughts?

**Katherine:** Thank you so much! I live with purpose and positivity. While we cannot control our life experiences, we can create a sense of purpose through them and that includes the ability to support others. I see having my own disability as giving me a leg up with my children's diagnoses. I know, inside and out, how the medical system works. I know I am an important member of any IEP or medical team for my babies. There is no “expert” that is going to tell me what needs to happen for my children. Having this knowledge, I am able to go into any appointment and any meeting with confidence and am able to advocate for my children and myself with ease. That is both a blessing and so tiring.





Liz: How would you encourage the parent or guardian that has newly found out/discovered their child diagnosis? Or their own?... What would be your words to the family that is processing the world of disabilities in the year 2023 and is scared or confused... I know what I would say... but what about You?



**Katherine:** You got this! Accept help - be that therapy, medication, whatever it is you need at the moment. Some Days you will feel your confidence radiating throughout and some days you will struggle to get out of bed - jump in the shower, get dressed, and leave the house. Adapting to a new diagnosis is a process and whatever you are feeling - your feelings are valid! Learn what you can so you can be prepared to advocate for your family and find people you can connect with to share and support you in this journey.

For the people around that love someone in this situation. Do something to help. Say you are coming over with a bottle of wine, dinner, coffee, a bag of bath bombs. Ask when you can watch the kids so that they can take a shower, go out to get a massage, get dinner. Buy them a gift certificate to get their hair done, nails, anything and say - when is a good time to make an appointment for you. Door dash, Uber eats, etc is always helpful. If they ask you for a donation for a medical fundraiser - donate \$25+, always. Do not say: "let me know if you need anything".

**LiZ:** My eldest daughter is 7.5... after reading this book as a family... She went back and read it privately. She now asks... " Momma. What makes you feel different? I don't think I feel different... am I. I feel the same like I always do. I feel like Victoria." I want to cry. Hearing my kid say this is both awe inspiring and heart wrecking. She's like her momma. AuDHD Gifted. She doesn't know yet I've told her. It has registered. So I've shared it with her. "You're your best Victoria. Keep feeling like her and if you only feel like her but with bad allergies that's great." So, any encouragement to the guardians or educators out there working with a kiddo that's different but feels like their best self?

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**Katherine:** I feel like being born "different" is a very different experience than those who become different later in life. Having cystic fibrosis is a part of me - it is an important piece of my identity. I don't feel different because it is all I have ever known. I have however been told I am different. The child in 5th grade who came to school and told me he googled CF and read that I was going to die. I replied with, I have read that we are all going to die. Thanks a lot buddy!

I see disability and difference as a strength. How do I see the world differently because of being uniquely me? How can I use my experiences to have empathy for others? What parts of my personality are directly connected to my disability identity. My resilience, my care for others, my strong voice. Those are defining parts of me that have been directly impacted in a positive way by being disabled.



# About the Host / Reviewer:

Interview / Tour Stop & Reviewer:  
Elizabeth Mobley

I am Elizabeth Anne Greer Mobley, affectionately known as, “The Melanated Neurodivergent Medical Momma,” the Owner & CEO of The Dandiest Life, LLC and the Founder of the young Non-Profit, Different is Dandy!

I am a Licensed Special Educator, Advocate, Homeschool Parent, and I like to call myself a Professional Agitator because I thrive best when I help people become their authentic selves through making holistic palpable changes in their lives and within their community.

We encourage The APPLE Way with The Dandiest Life! “Authentic People Pressing (On) & Learning Every Day!”-Elizabeth Anne Greer Mobley

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**Elizabeth Is a Mom, Wife, Daughter, Sister, Friend, Believer, Young Black Boss in Business, Educator, Doc of Ed Student & Neurodivergent!**

THE DANDIEST LIFE, LLC

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