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NEWS RELEASE

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Bonita Unified High School Student Publishes Debut Novel at 16, Developing Fantasy Trilogy

SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE – A single book recommendation in fourth grade transformed Bonita High School junior Lexi Cocomes from a reluctant reader into a passionate storyteller, a journey that has since led her to publish her debut novel at 16 and begin work on a full trilogy.

In the months following its release, Cocomes marked the milestone with a book signing at Judging By The Cover in San Dimas, where she shared her work with friends, family, community members, and staff from Allen Avenue Elementary, marking a full-circle moment for a student whose love of reading first began in the classroom.

"I never really liked to read when I was little, even though my mom has always been an avid reader," Cocomes said. "But my fourth-grade teacher, Mrs. DeAlmeida, introduced me to 'The Land of Stories' series, and I just fell in love with reading. I cried when it was over because I didn't want it to end."

For Cocomes, finding the right genre of literature was transformative, sparking a natural curiosity that quickly evolved into writing.

"I would read and think, 'What if this happened next?'" Cocomes said. "I started coming up with my own ideas, but it wasn't until seventh grade that I really took writing seriously."

Encouraged by a middle school English teacher who fostered a supportive environment for creative expression, Cocomes began drafting what would become her first novel. Within about a year, she had completed a full manuscript of what would become her debut young adult fantasy novel, "I Accept the Role of Villainess," published under the pen name Allie Kris.

Rooted in themes of revenge and complex character dynamics, the novel draws inspiration from the genres Cocomes gravitated toward as a reader. Influenced by niche fantasy storytelling and online fan communities, she set out to create a narrative that subverts traditional expectations.

"I really liked stories where people would say, 'I wish this character acted differently,'" Cocomes said. "So I wanted to take that idea and create a character who actually does."

MORE



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That creative exploration grew into a larger story arc, eventually expanding into a planned trilogy. Today, Cocores is refining her second installment while drafting her third, aiming to complete the series before she graduates – all while maintaining a 4.2 GPA and balancing Advanced Placement coursework and competing on Bonita High's golf team.

Bringing her story to life, however, required navigating the complex world of publishing. After attempting traditional publishing and receiving little response, Cocores decided to take a different path. With support from her family, she turned to Amazon's Kindle Direct Publishing platform, learning the ins and outs of editing, formatting and releasing her book independently.

"I kept getting no responses, and it really hurt my confidence," Cocores said. "So I decided, 'Why not just do it myself?' The publishing process was actually harder than writing the book, but it was worth it to be able to share my story."

Despite her success, Cocores said she is not considering writing as a future career, but rather as a way to unwind and express herself amid a busy schedule.

"Reading and writing is my escape," Cocores said. "It's something I do because I love it."

"I Accept the Role of Villainess" can be purchased [on Amazon](#). Her second novel will be released at the end of May.

"Lexi's achievement is a powerful example of what can happen when creativity, determination and a love of learning come together," Bonita Unified Superintendent Matt Wien said. "To publish a novel while still in high school is truly remarkable, and we are incredibly proud of her for pursuing her passion with such dedication and for inspiring others to find and share their own voice."

PHOTO CAPTION:

BUSD_COCORES: Bonita High School junior Lexi Cocores holds a book signing for her debut novel, "I Accept the Role of Villainess," at Judging By The Cover in San Dimas.

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