



After a long evening of cheer practice and an even longer day of sophomore year, Palo Alto High School sophomore Abigail Karel slumps down at her desk. With heaps of homework and little time, Karel struggles to finish her workload when faced with an unconventional responsibility: completing another batch of pages for her upcoming novel before its looming deadline.

For a 16 year old, Karel harbors the rare achievement of being a published author. With six books out and another on the way, Karel is steadily building a career for herself in the world of words.

Karel first started writing around age eleven, when her school hosted a National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) competition. The goal of the competition is to write an entire 50,000 word manuscript only in the month of November, and while many participants fail at the month-long challenge, it often sparks inspiration for a long-term project.

“[The NaNoWriMo competition] was when I wrote my first bigger-ish piece,” Karel said. “[That story] was my first understanding of how I could be whoever I want through [writing].”

At first, people did not believe that a middle schooler had what it took to become a published author. However, Karel kept writing to prove to others that her ambitions should not be dismissed as childish fantasies.

“[People thought] ‘look at this twelve year old thinking she could be amazing, how cute!’, but I kept telling [people that] I wanted to be a writer and I wanted to be published,” Karel said. “At first my

parents [said] ‘that’s a cute hobby,’ but then I was really putting in effort and trying my best to make my goal happen.”

Through writing, Karel felt she discovered an outlet from which she could convey her ideas and actualize her imagination.

“I never really knew how to express myself when I was younger, but when I started writing, it showed me how I could express myself through my words,” Karel said.

As Karel became more serious about her writing career, she took her first professional step: publishing a book.

Karel self-published *Arkimine* in February of 2020, a fiction novel following the life of a teenage girl who lives in a quarantined community built to protect its inhabitants from a contagious blood disease. Shortly after in August of the same year, Karel self-published *Before the Shadow Hits the Night*, *Arkimine*’s sequel.

“It was very cool for me to [know] I’ve created a whole world [with] just my words, and it’s going to be whatever I want [it] to be,” Karel said.

While Karel has enjoyed her career as an author so far, she has also experienced some hardships, the

biggest one being the process of publishing.

“When you write your first novel, it’s really hard to work your way to the point where you can publish,” Karel said.

After the initial release of her first book, reaching a big audience was difficult, but Karel made sure to celebrate the little victories as well.

“I got a few people to read it which I was very happy about,” Karel said. “So slowly little things start building up, because it’s not

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- Abigail Karel, 10

like what you're expecting in a movie, where you write one thing and it's perfect."

Due to the rise in technology, many people have started to stray away from traditional methods of reading.

"As social media grows, people read less and less and if they do read, they try to read on Kindles or on their phone, like ebooks," Karel said.

Although her potential audience has been decreasing in the past years, she is not letting anyone get in the way of her dreams.

"For now, I plan on keeping up with [writing]," Karel said.

Even though Karel is a published author, she is still only a sophomore in high school, so finding the balance between her two lives, of author and student, is difficult.

"It's hard with extracurriculars, because I'm juggling, in class, doing a page or emailing back my illustrator some notes about the covers, or I'm doing work [during] my prep at school," Karel said.

With little to no time to rest, Karel finds the balance difficult, but not impossible.

"[Sometimes] I don't do my homework because I have meetings with my advisor to talk about my book, so you can basically say, I don't really get a break until I sleep," Karel said. "It's definitely hard to juggle it, but I somehow make it work."

Though she has experienced many obstacles in her career as an author, Karel chooses to focus on the aspects of it that bring her joy, such as the actual product of her hard work.

"The book I'm writing now is by far my favorite, because it's about my grandparents' love story and how they met," Karel said. "[This is] the one I'm most connected with, because it's real life and my family."

Through hard work and talent, Karel's overarching goal is to see one of her books on the big screen.

"My goal one day is to have one of my books [turn into a] movie and that motivates me to keep pushing harder until that goal comes true," Karel said.

Getting an initial start as a career might seem difficult to most, but for Karel, she has let nothing stop her from pursuing her dreams.

"A lot of people think it's impossible to get published, or to even finish a story, but if you put the effort in, you will accomplish it eventually," Karel said. "It's a slow ride but if you keep going it [will] happen."

