

A Talk with Allie Sarah, Author of *The Gossip Games*

How did you come up with the idea for this story?

I was fifteen when I got back into reading, and as a quick reader, I burned through books very easily. I found my favorite tropes — fake dating and enemies to lovers — but couldn't find many books that I loved that combined the two. Gracie and Dean kind of popped into my head, but I wanted one of them to have relatives at school, hence the creation of the Ashcrofts. That's how I got the idea to add in the best friend's brother trope, and the story just grew from there.

Where was the book written?

Funny story, actually. I spent a lot of time in my school's woodworking lab, and it became a hangout spot for me and my close friends. Sometimes I was making wooden jewelry, others I was just chilling or working on homework. I'm not sure when it started, but at some point I began propping my laptop on top of the (closed!) laser cutter. So my book was partially written on top of a laser cutting machine in a woodworking lab.

Why was it so important for you to include strong family relationships?

My family have always been my biggest supporters. I have three younger siblings, and although we fight sometimes, we really get along. They're such an important part of my life, and I wanted Dean to have a support system like I do. The adults in his life aren't the best, so it was extra important that Dean have a sibling and sibling-like cousins.

How were you able to publish a book at such a young age?

I'm 18, and I started writing *The Gossip Games* at 15. It was hard, balancing school and writing, but then COVID hit. Stuck at home, there wasn't much to do besides hide in my room and write. I found my publisher during my senior year of high school, and I was lucky that it worked out so that most of my editing happened during the summer. As for during the school year? Really, really good time management.

Do you have plans for a second book?

Yes! I'm actually contracted for both Jesse and Theo's books. Jesse's book is set for publication in January 2024, and Theo's is supposed to release in October 2024. I can't give away too many details yet, but it's pretty obvious who Jesse ends up with, and we haven't met Theo's partner yet.