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Redford author gaining loyal following

By Larry Ruehlen
Observer Staff Writer

Julie Cassar can't hide her excitement as she recalls reading the early reviews of her first novel Ruby Blue.

"There was a blogger in Scotland giving updates as she read it," said Cassar, a Redford resident and mother of three. "When she finally posted the review, she raved about it. I jumped up and down. She only gave two stars to the next book, so I knew she wasn't easy."

That review was authored by a reader who simply calls herself Siobh^on:

"Ruby is one of those characters who you can instantly connect with. She is a normal teen girl who is smart and funny but with this extra ability to see fairies. Which is kind of cool. And she is very loyal, she knows that fairies exist yet she won't betray them, not even to tell her best friend. She is also very brave, she tackles the dragon situation head on where if it was me I would be running in the opposite direction."

Dozens more reviews followed and 90 percent were exceedingly positive.

"I got to thinking, maybe it doesn't suck," said Cassar.

With that, she began aggressively marketing *Deja Blue*. The fact that it is self-published is not a negative in the eyes of Cassar — there is a burgeoning pool of writers who are deliberately sidestepping traditional publishing houses in favor of having greater control over the process.

She realizes she probably won't make big bucks but that was never the point.

"I wanted to share Ruby's story," she said. "I'm just glad people are connecting with it because the character is so close to me."

Cassar wrote the rough draft in just two weeks and began writing the follow-up, *Deja Blue*, shortly thereafter.

Both are available on Amazon in e-book form and paperback. If you drive by her house and see a single light on at midnight, it's likely illuminating Cassar as she first discovers what will happen to Ruby in the third book.

The idea for the four-part series evolved from her childhood. Her mother has always loved gardening and passed on the hobby to Cassar. Talk of garden fairies was common back then and Cassar often escaped into their world.

"I've always been enchanted by fairies," she said. "And I started thinking, 'What if it was real?'"

That possibility now unfolds over hundreds of pages as readers learn about Ruby. Cassar describes her lead character as an average (somewhat dorky) ice-cream eating, garden-loving teenager, who is constantly being annoyed by her little brother.

Ruby is best friends with possibly the only Goth kid in town and just happens to see fairies.

The books are written for young adults but people of all ages are reading them if the reviews on Amazon are any indication.

And for those who think the books will amount to nothing more than stocking stuffers for friends and family, *Deja Blue* has already been downloaded more than 10,000 times from Amazon and is ranked among top sellers in the

fiction/mythology category.

“I had chills when I saw my book on the same list as the Wizard of Oz,” said Cassar. “I took a screen capture and still have it.”

Cassar considers herself a good story teller, not a polished writer. But this blogger/artist/legal assistant had a story in her that she just had to tell. She'd already given professional writing a shot but her first manuscript failed to catch on with publishers.

While *Adventures of a Nobody: A Memoir of Friendship, Art & Love*, remains unpublished, the dozens of rejections letters didn't destroy her ambition.

“Now I'm starting to see more possibilities,” said Cassar, on the chances of becoming a full-time writer. “I wrote what I like to read and people seem to like it.”

For more information, go to the website juliecassar.weebly.com.