**Q&A with David Michael Williams**

**What is *If Dreams Can Die* about?**

Life and death, love and hate, hope and despair, dreams and reality, identity and illusion, friendship and rivalry, faith and doubt, damnation and redemption—these are all themes found within The Soul Sleep Cycle and *If Dreams Can Die* especially.

But the back-cover blurb sums up the story much better:

The grave could not contain her grief.

Annette has devoted her life—and afterlife—to reclaiming her departed family, no matter the cost. To stop her from destroying the dreamscape, former enemies must unite and declare war on the so-called Lady of Peace.

But how do you defeat someone who is already dead?

*If Dreams Can Die* depicts the final confrontation between a death-defying cult and the CIA-sanctioned dream drifters sworn to defend the collective unconscious.

**Who is *If Dreams Can Die* about?**

The book focuses on Annette Young, a woman who lost her husband and daughter early in life and never fully recovered from the emotional trauma. She takes matters into her own hands, making compromise after compromise in the pursuit of what she perceives as a happy ending for everyone.

It’s up to the reader to decide whether Annette—as the so-called Lady of Peace—is a hero or a villain.

Characters from the first two books also carry the story at various points, including Milton, a dream-drifting pioneer recovering from a coma; William, a brilliant but dangerous fugitive; and Allison (a.k.a. Syn) a CIA-sanctioned dream drifter. *If Dreams Can Die* introduced a new point-of-view character as well: Brynhildr, the valkyrie commander of Project Valhalla.

**Where does *If Dreams Can Die* take place?**

That’s a tricky question since many scenes take place in shared dreams. Real-world action is split between the East and West Coasts in the U.S., while various dreams and memories will take readers all across the globe, including China, Russia, and maybe even Antarctica.

And then there’s the tumultuous space between dreams, the setting of the series’ climax.

**Who will enjoy this book?**

I’d love to say anyone can pick up *If Dreams Can Die* and enjoy it, but that’s simply not true. Although I think the story is strong enough to stand on its own, newcomers to the series would lack necessary context to understand the full extent of the plot.

Readers should definitely read *If Souls Can Sleep* and *If Sin Dwells Deep* before diving into Book Three.

As for the series as a whole, fans of speculative fiction are the most obvious audience. The Soul Sleep Cycle contains elements of several genres, including science fiction, fantasy, paranormal and suspense. The series could also be categorized as dreampunk, a subgenre that raises the question “What is real?”

However, anyone who loves rich characters and unpredictable plots can enjoy the series.

**What is *If Dreams Can Die* “rated”?**

The suggested audience is age 18 and older. While *If Dreams Can Die* lacks the explicit sexual content of its predecessor, Book Three nevertheless contains course language and explores mature subjects, including infidelity and suicide.

**What does the title mean?**

I established something of a naming convention with the first two books, *If Souls Can Sleep* and *If Sin Dwells Deep*. I’ve always liked using “if clauses” for the series because they inject a sense of suspense.

I decided on the title *If Dreams Can Die* very early in the project. Dreaming and death have been prevailing themes throughout the series, and then there’s the ambiguity. Are all dreams on the chopping block or just one woman’s vision? The alliteration didn’t hurt, either.

**Does Book Three pick up where Book Two left off?**

Yes, it does.

Whereas the first two books were parallel novels, covering roughly the same time span from different sides of the saga, *If Dreams Can Die* begins immediately after the events of *If Souls Can Sleep* and *If Sin Dwells Deep*.

**How difficult was it to write Book Three?**

In some ways, it was more difficult than I had anticipated. I knew, broadly speaking, where the series was headed. I knew how it had to end. But *how* I was going to tell this story changed throughout the planning phase and from draft to draft.

The greatest challenge was choosing the right narrators. Book One, by and large, was told by three point-of-view characters; it was Vincent’s story, as told by Leah and Vincent himself, with Milton’s scenes providing hints at the bigger picture. Book Two centered on Allison/Syn, with chapters from William’s and the Wolf’s perspectives sprinkled throughout.

I knew Annette had to tell her story in Book Three, but what other voices were needed? I struggled to find the best support narrators. In the end, I decided not to artificially restrict myself to only three p.o.v. characters.

Milton, Allison, and William return to provide their perspectives for a handful of chapters, and Brynhildr also steps into the spotlight to reveal more about the dynamics within Project Valhalla.

**Is this the final book of the series?**

I honestly don’t know.

I *do* know *If Dreams Can Die* spells the end of the story I set out to tell when planning Book One. But I’d love to return to the dreamscape someday. I suspect Daniel’s daughter has an interesting life ahead of her, for one thing, and the future of Project Valhalla surely contains some twists and turns.

If there is enough interest—and if there are enough sales—to justify it, I’d love to add a fourth book to The Soul Sleep Cycle.

For now, however, I’m excited to pursue something new. I’ve been working on this wonderfully weird series, on and off, for 12½ years, so there’s a backlog of stories I’m eager to tell.

**Where did you find inspiration for this book?**

First and foremost, I wanted to provide a satisfying resolution for the series. I’m not one to tie up storylines with tidy, little bows. Yet the first two books posed a lot of questions, and I felt it necessary to answer the most important ones before the end of Book Three.

*If Dreams Can Die* is largely Annette’s story, a tale that started decades ago when she lost her family. What makes Annette remarkable isn’t her ability to dream drift, but her single-minded determination to defy the natural order of things to accomplish her goal—no matter the sacrifice.

It’s a stark contrast to the Vincent’s actions at the end of *If Souls Can Sleep*…

And while I didn’t set out to write a book about grief and hopelessness and the value of life, I have seen the impact of depression firsthand. Even though I write books with fantastic elements, I believe it’s important to ground my stories in reality, which means writing believable characters grappling with relatable problems.

**What is your next project?**

As mentioned earlier, I have no shortage of ideas.

Staring a new series sounds like too much of a commitment right now. Maybe I’ll try my hand at a stand-alone novel, something for a slightly younger audience so that my kids don’t have to wait so long to read it.

I’m also flirting with the idea of releasing a new novel set in Altaerra—the same setting as The Renegade Chronicles—as a serial on the Radish app. I’d love to transform The Soul Sleep Cycle novels into audiobooks to reach a wider audience.

All I can say for certain is that I’m far from finished with this crazy thing called being an author.

**When will *If Dreams Can Die* be available to purchase?**

*If Dreams Can Die* will be available in paperback and for Kindle at Amazon.com on May 21.