**Q&A with David Michael Williams**

**What is *If Souls Can Sleep* about?**

According to the back of the book,

*If Souls Can Sleep* introduces a hidden world where gifted individuals possess the power to invade the dreams of others. Two rival factions have transformed the dreamscape into a war zone where all reality is relative and even the dead can’t rest in peace.

The story centers on Vincent Cruz, a man who lost his daughter and never recovered from the tragedy. He’s stuck, haunted by a dream that replays the dreadful memory over and over. Then the dream suddenly stops, and he’s faced with a new nightmare that starts to bleed into the real world.

**Who is *If Souls Can Sleep* about?**

It’s largely Vincent’s story, but he’s not in it alone. Jerry, Vincent’s stoner roommate, and Leah, a sleep doctor with issues of her own, get pulled into the insanity.

There’s also Milton, a partial amnesiac who is on the run and doing his best to stave off sleep forever.

**Who is your favorite character?**

I don’t think I could ever pick a favorite, but I do loving writing characters who allow me to express humor. Jerry provides comic relief, but honestly, DJ—a possibly crazy bus rider—takes the cake for fun dialogue. He has some of the best lines in the whole book.

**What is the setting for *If Souls Can Sleep*?**

Most of the story is set in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In fact, Vincent’s and Jerry’s apartment mirrors the one I lived in while attending college there. After writing The Renegade Chronicles, which take place in an alien world of my own devising (Altaerra), it was fun to draw from real-world locations and experiences. The bulk of the book is set in the year 2007.

*If Souls Can Sleep* also includes glimpses at other worlds that may or may not be real.

**Who will enjoy this book?**

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I don’t start out by picking a specific demographic to cater to throughout the writing process. Instead, I write the best version of the story clinging tenaciously to my gray matter and hope there are people out there who will also appreciate it.

With *If Souls Can Sleep*, I set out to write something very different from the sword-and-sorcery fantasy stories I had been reading and writing up until then. I wanted to create a book I had never read before, something very unusual and unique.

To be blunt, this book was an experiment, not so much nudging me out of my comfort zone as submerging me into a completely unfamiliar environment. As a result, the book is a mashup of several different genres, including science fiction, fantasy, suspense, and metafiction.

Categorizing *If Souls Can Sleep* can be tricky, but I consider its genre-bending nature a strength because the story has something for readers of many different backgrounds. It’s complex yet accessible, peculiar yet relatable.

While fans of speculative fiction—including fantasy and science fiction—are perhaps the obvious audience, I’m pleasantly surprised to find, among my pre-readers, that the book appeals to people outside those genres too.

Bringing it back around to my initial goal: if you want to read a book that’s unlike any you’ve read before, give *If Souls Can Sleep* a try.

**What makes *If Souls Can Sleep* unique?**

I’m not the first person to entertain the notion of oneironauts (individuals who can psychically visit the dreams of others), but my take on “dream drifters” paints an original portrait of the relationship between life and death and the dreamscape. I’ve cobbled together a number of theories, philosophies and religious beliefs to put my own personal spin on the collective unconscious.

Things also get very “meta” in *If Souls Can Sleep*, as I explore what qualifies something real—including the people who populate books.

**What is *If Souls Can Sleep* “rated”?**

If it were a movie, it would likely earn a PG-13 rating. There’s swearing, some violence, drug and alcohol use, sexual content, and other mature topics. I expect the story will resonate with readers age 17 and older. That’s the suggested audience.

**How long did it take you to write the book?**

I started writing *If Souls Can Sleep* on Dec. 31, 2006, and it took two and a half years to compose a complete first draft. I then edited it, jumped into writing the sequel, and worked on a handful of other projects. By the time the book hits shelves, it will be more than 11 years in the making.

Fortunately for fans, they won’t have to wait that long to get their hands on the sequel…

**What does the title mean?**

The title comes from a quote found within the book: “If souls can sleep, then why not dream?”

I flirted with other title options but realized, as time went on, that the opening line—“If souls can sleep”—could function as an apt foundation for the series as a whole. I also liked the idea of using a clause that leaves the reader hanging, an inherent sense of suspense.

The titles of the next two books in series follow a similar formula: *If Sin Dwells Deep* and *If Dreams Can Die*.

**Is this another trilogy?**

Yes. Sort of. Maybe?

I have written three books for The Soul Sleep Cycle to date. It wasn’t my intention to write a trilogy. In fact, I once (naïvely) believed I could tell the entire story in a single volume. Halfway through *If Souls Can Sleep*, I realized I needed to streamline my subplots. A second book became necessary to tell the whole story, and even before I started writing *If Sin Dwells Deep*, I realized I would need a third book to reach a satisfying conclusion.

Quite possibly, three books are enough. Yet I always leave a few doors open for future storylines, just in case…

**Why didn’t you publish all three at once (like with The Renegade Chronicles)?**

I certainly could have, and I’m sure there are those who would rather not have to wait to see what happens next. But publishing three books at once presents many challenges. I learned a lot from publishing The Renegade Chronicles en masse, and I didn’t want to end up cutting corners just so I could get this new series out there all at once.

From a marketing standpoint, it’s also difficult to sustain public interest when all three books are available on Day 1. As a compromise, however, readers won’t have to wait too long for the next installments.

*If Sin Dwells Deep* is slated for fall 2018; *If Dreams Can Die*, spring 2019.

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

As with many of my story ideas, the inspiration came as a random thought—this one at a roller-skating rink in the late ’90s. I was thinking about the strangers in our dreams and wondering where they came from. Do they wear the faces of people we glimpsed in passing over the years? Or are they composites our subconscious cooks up to fill out the cast of any given dream?

What if they are real people—other dreamers?

The rough outline of a short story popped into my head, but it never made it to paper. Almost a decade later, the idea resurfaced, allowing me to play with a handful of abstract concepts, including identity and the definition of “real.”

For Vincent, I thought, “What is the worst thing that can happen to a guy?” Because I was a new father with a young daughter at the time, the answer came easily: losing a child.

How does a parent cope with that? What if he can’t?

**Will you write any more Renegade Chronicles books?**

Writing more about Klye and the gang would be a lot of fun. I have no shortage of plots mapped out, so jumping back to Altaerra wouldn’t be too difficult.

I’ve written a complete draft of a novel starring a young wizardess who will eventually cross paths with the characters from The Renegade Chronicles. The epilogue of *Martyrs and Monsters* hints at that storyline. It’s possible I may polish up that book and publish it someday.

Sales of The Renegade Chronicles will also go a long way toward determining whether I return to Altaerra. (So if you want new stories, tell your friends about the existing ones!)

**What is your next project?**

Preparing *If Sin Dwells Deep* and *If Dreams Can Die* for publication will take up a significant chunk of 2018, not to mention promoting *If Souls Can Sleep*.

I’m currently working on a collaborative project in a different medium—a new discomfort zone—but that is a secret for now. I also have had an idea for a standalone novel that’s been trying to get my attention for years. Maybe I’ll finally get around to outlining it.

**When will *If Souls Can Sleep* be available to purchase?**

The official publication date is Jan. 30, 2018, with preorders available here:

* Paperback: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/0991056280/>
* Kindle e-book: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0785M6RVZ/>

*If Souls Can Sleep* will be available in other e-reader formats as early as May 2018.