**Q&A with David Michael Williams**

**What are The Renegade Chronicles about?**

On the surface, The Renegade Chronicles is about a civil war in the magical, medieval world of Altaerra. The most powerful peace treaty in history is on the verge of collapse, and a certain band of rebels has made it their mission to learn who is really pulling the Alliance of Nations’ strings—and why.

The series is firmly entrenched in the sword-and-sorcery fantasy genre, though there are elements of mystery, suspense and even comedy. While the world of Altaerra is populated with mythical creatures like elves and ogres, the series focuses primarily on humans caught up in political intrigue and matters of life and death.

In a nutshell, The Renegade Chronicles is about war, unexpected alliances, magical swords, unholy crusaders, redemption and hope.

**Who are The Renegade Chronicles about?**

The series features a wide array of characters, including thieves, knights, pirates, wizards and assassins. Everyone has his or her own agenda, and most people believe they fight for “the side of right.” But a major theme woven throughout the series is that the truth tends to fall somewhere between black and white.

The main characters are the Renegades, a ragtag band of rebels brought together by a twist of fate, including Klye, a former thief and self-proclaimed leader; Ragellan, a disgraced Knight of Superius, and his protégé Horcalus; Othello, a taciturn forester; Plake, a former rancher who thinks with his fists; Scout, an explorer who knows the island better than most; the pirate king Pistol and his loyal first mate, Crooker; Arthur, a young runaway; and Lilac, a mysterious woman with an enchanted blade.

You can learn more about them at [david-michael-williams.com/meet-the-renegades](http://david-michael-williams.com/meet-the-renegades).

**Who is your favorite character?**

That’s like asking me who my favorite child is!

I suppose I have many favorites. Klye Tristan, the Renegade Leader, is probably the easiest for me to write; I’ve known him the longest. Characters like Scout and Noel are gems because they provide comedic relief. I have a lot of respect for Horcalus and Stannel Bismarc, both men of principle. And as obnoxious as Plake can be, he’s undeniably a catalyst when it comes to the plot. Zusha is a lot of fun, too, because of her unique perspective.

**What is the setting for The Renegade Chronicles?**

The story takes place in the fantastical world of Altaerra, which is home to many different peoples, including humans, dwarves, elves, ogres and a few other traditional fantasy races. And there are a few species that are unique to Altaerra alone, such as the dreaded midge.

Readers of The Renegade Chronicles will traverse the breadth of the island of Capricon, which is populated primarily by humans and defended by the Knights of Superius. The island is home to temples, castles, foreboding mountains, abandoned settlements, and no shortage of secrets.

You can download the map of Capricon at [david-michael-williams.com/capricon](http://david-michael-williams.com/capricon).

**Who will enjoy The Renegade Chronicles?**

Fans of fantasy fiction who like fast-paced, action-packed plots, a robust cast of characters and plenty of plot twists will appreciate The Renegade Chronicles. The focus is on the individual adventurers, most of them humans, and while the series borrows from established fantasy tropes, folks who have never read fantasy books before should be able to grasp and enjoy these stories.

The Renegade Chronicles would be a good stepping stone for teens who grew up on Harry Potter and are looking for a series that features more mature characters. They’re ready for something with a little more grit—but not something as brutal as George R.R. Martin’s “Game of Thrones.” Having said that, I also think adults of all ages can appreciate these adventures.

**What makes The Renegade Chronicles unique?**

I’ll be the first to admit that The Renegade Chronicles are something of a throwback to the sword-and-sorcery stories I grew up with. It’s not as arch and grueling as Tolkien, and it’s certainly more lighthearted than the gritty urban fantasy that has gained popularity in recent years.

I published The Renegade Chronicles for people, like me, who want a healthy balance of high-stakes danger and good, old-fashioned fun.

**What are The Renegade Chronicles “rated”?**

If this were a movie, I’d say a hard PG or a soft PG-13. There is mild language and a few sexual innuendos. There’s also violence, and characters do die occasionally. But blood and gore are not the focus.

**Where can someone buy The Renegade Chronicles?**

All three paperbacks are available at [Amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com/David-Michael-Williams/e/B00HEBQ7CI).

The e-book editions—including a three-in-one collection with a bonus appendix detailing the people, places and particularities of Altaerra—are exclusively available at the [Kindle Store](http://www.amazon.com/Renegade-Chronicles-Collection-Volumes-ebook/dp/B01DL2DPL4).

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

The first book, “Rebels and Fools,” took the longest. I wrote the first draft while attending college and rewrote the entire manuscript my senior year. Volumes 2 and 3 took a year apiece to write (two drafts each).

When I came back to the manuscripts in late 2015, I dedicated a month to each one, refining them and making substantial edits.

**What do the titles mean?**

Don’t get me started on how difficult it is to come up with compelling novel titles!

All three titles hint at the duality of the characters. For example, “Rebels and Fool”—does that mean the enemies of the rebels are the fools, or are the rebels themselves fools? The same goes for “Heroes and Liars” and “Martyrs and Monsters.” The ambiguity is intentional and, in fact, integral.

**Why do fantasy series always seem to be trilogies?**

That’s an arcane secret…kind of like why every potion requires “eye of newt.” In all seriousness, I don’t think I set out to write three books specifically. I always knew where Volume 1 would end, and after I finished Volume 2, I realized it would take only one more installment to complete the main story arc.

But it’s altogether possible additional volumes could be published somewhere down the road. The Renegades have many adventures ahead of them.

**Why did you decide to publish all three at once?**

We live in an age of instant gratification. I know I hate waiting for a writer to finish the next installment in a series. Since I already had all three novels written, it didn’t make sense to stagger the releases of Volumes 2 and 3. If someone enjoyed “Rebels and Fools,” I didn’t want anything getting in the way of their buying “Heroes and Liars” and “Martyrs and Monsters” immediately.

It’s a similar philosophy to Netflix series in which an entire season is released all at once. People like to “binge watch,” so why not “binge read?” The Renegade Chronicles is like “House of Cards”—only with magical swords.

**Why did you decide to publish The Renegade Chronicles yourself?**

I wrote three complete manuscripts before finding an agent to represent the series or a publisher to buy it. And, frankly, no one was interested. To be fair, the first book was bloated—175,000 words is too long for an unknown author’s first book—and all three books needed copious edits. The decade in between finishing the third book and revisiting the series provided me with the skills and the objectivity to go back and fix the manuscripts.

The bottom line is I had faith in the stories and the writing, and I wanted others to be able to enjoy them. Creating my own independent publishing company, One Million Words, was a means to that end.

**Why did you name your publishing company One Million Words?**

A good friend of mine once told me that anything an author writes before one million words are just “finger exercises.” It’s a derivative of a familiar adage that proclaims a writer must put in a ton of practice before he or she will be any good. After he told me that, I did a word count and was pleased to report back that I had, in fact, already written one million words of fiction.

There are also roughly one million words in the English language. Plus I thought “One Million Words” had a nice ring to it. I had been using that phrase for my blog and social media accounts for years, so when it came time to create my own imprint, I couldn’t think of a more appropriate name.

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

I’ve been a fan of fantasy since before I even know what fantasy was. Books, movies, television, video games—I always gravitated toward medieval settings and magical adventures. I wholeheartedly fell in love with the DragonLance books when I was in high school, and I was a big fan of the Final Fantasy video game series before that. I wanted to create a rich world of my own, a mystical playground for the characters that popped into my head.

**Who are your favorite authors?**

Some of my favorite fantasy authors are Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman, not only because of their contributions to the DragonLance saga, but also for the Death Gate Cycle; R.A. Salvatore, primarily for his DemonWars series; Neil Gaiman; George R.R. Martin; and, of course, J.R.R. Tolkien, the grandfather of the fantasy genre.

Beyond fantasy, I’m a big fan of William Faulkner, and one of my favorite novels of all time is Alexandre Dumas’ “The Count of Monte Cristo.”

**What was the biggest challenge in publishing The Renegade Chronicles?**

When you are preparing to publish three novels in two formats (print and digital), there are a lot of moving parts. On top of that, I held myself to a very aggressive timeline. When things are running that tight, even a minor setback can impact a lot of other tasks.

To tell the truth, I think my greatest challenge still lies ahead: marketing the series and reaching new customers.

**Will there be any future books in The Renegade Chronicles?**

I’d love to write more stories about Klye Tristan and the gang. I have plenty of additional plots already mapped out, so jumping back into Altaerra wouldn’t be 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.

By and large, sales of the first three volumes will determine whether I can afford to return to this world.

**What is your next project?**

I’m stepping away from Altaerra for at least a little while. I’m in the middle of writing a science fiction series called The Soul Sleep Cycle. While my agent looks for a buyer for the first two books in that series (“If Souls Can Sleep” and “If Sin Dwells Deep”), I’ll be working on the third novel, “If Dreams Can Die.”

**Do you have any advice for other writers?**

Oh, I have lots of advice—mostly lessons I’ve learned along the way. I include writing tips on my website ([david-michael-williams.com](http://www.david-michael-williams.com)).

What I will say is I’m glad print-on-demand publishing was not available when I was in my early twenties. Self-publishing almost makes it too easy to put one’s work out there, and I’ve seen plenty of examples of dabblers and amateurs publishing before they were ready. I fear that I would have been among them; if I had published The Renegade Chronicles before 2016, they would have been an inferior product. My advice to young writers is to wait until you’re prepared to treat your fiction as a business before considering self-publishing.

**What are your long-term goals?**

First and foremost, I want to continue to publish my novels, whether through a traditional publishing house or through One Million Words. I have a lot of ideas, so here’s to hoping I find readers who appreciate my stories and will support my dream of getting paid to do what I love.

In addition to novels, I’d love to write for a video game or a graphic novel. My wife says I should produce a pun-a-day calendar. At this point, I’m keeping everything on the table.