

Sunrise over San Antonio

Robert Wallace Meyer

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Sunrise over San Antonio explores an alternate historical outcome of the Battle of the Alamo.

What if the Texas army actually won the Battle of the Alamo in 1836? Robert Wallace Meyer's *Sunrise over San Antonio* mixes historical fiction with elements of fantasy in a story focused on a time-traveling warrior.

Emil Joseph finds himself in a difficult predicament—leading the charge to change the outcome of the epic battle at the Alamo. First, though, he faces present-day disappointments when he is laid off from his carpentry job.

A “dream facilitator” enters Emil’s fitful sleep to ask him to go back to the Alamo. He agrees and is whisked back to the nineteenth century. He has one month to prepare for Santa Anna, and another to defeat him.

It is not clear why Emil is chosen for this job, other than that he is unemployed, battle-ready, and willing to help change the past. He is muscular, able to fight, and has knowledge of what went down during the fight for the Alamo, all of which helps him to anticipate and plan.

History buffs will enjoy the interesting character development around Emil. He crosses paths with a variety of historical figures, including famous frontiersman Davy Crockett, Colonel Jim Bowie, and Lieutenant Colonel William B. Travis. The work also delves into the backstory of Mexican-born Spaniard Santa Anna, often referred to as “the Napoleon of the West,” whose Mexican forces surrounded the Alamo, defeating and killing all the men inside.

With descriptive prose and dialogue, Meyer captures the feel of the Old West, with its smoky campfires, gun training and horse-riding maneuvers, and exchanges with Indians. He also surmises what could have happened after a Texan victory, following the men as they plant farms and build a hospital. Even though Emil has to return to the present day, the dream facilitator takes him back from time to time so he can check on his friends and see how they are successfully thriving.

Some of the character interplay is difficult to believe, as when Emil quickly persuades Bowie to go along with his plan to defeat the Mexican army, though Bowie doesn’t know who Emil is or where he came from. It’s also sometimes difficult to remain engaged with the many different substories and characters threaded through the novel, particularly after the battle sequence, which is really the climax of the story. Meyer does relate Emil’s assimilation back to the present through a series of epilogues but ultimately leaves the reality of his interaction with people from the past unclear.

Sunrise over San Antonio inventively explores an alternate historical outcome, with an ending that leaves readers yearning for a follow-up to Emil’s story.

BECKY DIAMOND (February 3, 2017)

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