New low-fantasy novel mines author's own experience of teen loneliness and panic attacks to explore the edges of existence

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Daniel David is a London-based writer who began work on their second novel, Joshua and the Lost Souls, over a decade ago, inspired by their own otherworldly experiences as a teen and curiosity for a reality that may lie just beyond our own understanding.

Coming March 1st 2023, this low-fantasy-YA crossover draws readers into a gritty yet hopeful story of friendship, betrayal, belonging, and maybe even the meaning of everything. It's a dark and brooding novel, in part a letter of solidarity to all the weirdos, outcasts and dreamers of the world, that follows 15-year-old Joshua as he goes on a mind-bending journey to a mysterious parallel world, just as his own starts to fall apart.

A deeply personal novel, Daniel explains how the story first came to be. “I wrote my first notes about this boy called Joshua over 10 years ago, drawing on my experiences of loneliness and hearing voices as a teenager. Since then, characters have come and gone, situations have changed, worlds have grown and I’ve even had to create a language. Strangely though, Joshua has remained the same throughout, a rather lost and lonely boy who I’ve become really fond of.”

Joshua’s world is a difficult place. Since his mum’s death, he’s lived in a small house with his alcoholic dad and his dad’s girlfriend. They don’t have much money, often going days without power and living on benefits and food bank donations. After a traumatic event, Joshua finds himself transported to The Coral, a strange world populated by genderless, multi-dimensional beings called ‘folk’.

“The Coral is a bit of a paradox,” says Daniel, “drawn from a number of ideas around nondualism, metaphysical idealism [as popularised by Barnardo Kastrup and the Essentia Foundation] with a little druidry in the mix. Maybe it only exists in Joshua’s mind. Maybe it’s the other way around. It’s a big ‘what if’ really. What if those voices I heard years ago, or the inner voices we all hear all the time, are a bleed through from another dimension. I began to wonder what that would mean, how I would’ve felt aged fifteen or sixteen if I’d followed them and discovered something truly remarkable.”

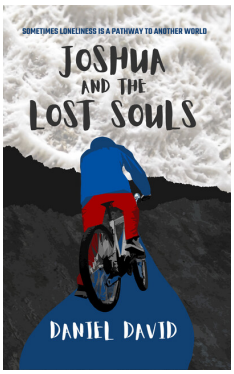
As Joshua explores this world outside of time, gender, and life as we know it, he learns he has an incredible gift, but in his own reality his desire to belong gets the better of him and after making a stupid decision, he triggers a catastrophic chain of events that he must sacrifice everything to make right.

This novel will appeal not only to YA readers who enjoyed the otherworldly mystery and identity exploration of Ryan Douglass’ The Taking of Jake Livingston, or the gritty, suburban character building of Annalee Newitz’s The Future of Another Timeline, but also to readers who revel in the playfulness and sense that anything is possible in Murakami’s classic Kafka on the Shore. This is a story that will resonate with anyone who’s struggled to find where they belong.

‘Joshua and the Lost Souls’ is available to pre-order for March 1st 2023.

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