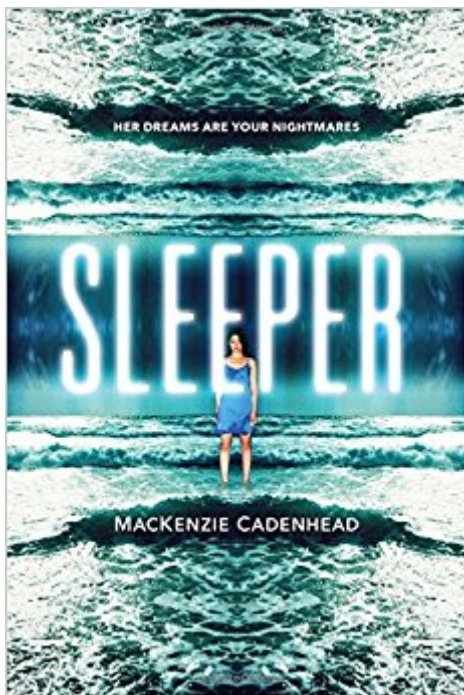


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# Sleeper



## Synopsis

A new suspense-ridden thriller that's Heathers meets Inception. As if surviving high school wasn't hard enough, Sarah Reyes suffers from REM Sleep Behavior Disorder, a parasomnia that causes her to physically act out her dreams. When she almost snaps her friend's neck at a sleepover, Sarah and her nocturnal habits are thrust into the spotlight and she becomes a social pariah, complete with public humiliation. When an experimental drug comes onto the market that promises nighttime normalcy, Sarah agrees to participate in the trial. At first, she seems to be cured. Then the side effects kick in. Why does a guy from her nightmare show up at school? Are the eerily similar dreams she's sharing with her classmates' coincidence or of her making? Is she losing her mind or does this drug offer way more than sleep?

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Both savvy and vulnerable, Sarah draws readers in with her dry wit as she laments her fall from social grace. Well-placed social media and pop-culture references further anchor them in Sarah's increasingly surreal world. The paranormal elements of the story are suspenseful and surprising." - Kirkus  
"Thrilling. Sleeper is entirely enthralling, with twists and layers that race through to the end." - Foreword Reviews  
"The dream scenes are vivid, fast paced, and exhilarating, filled with monsters, both human and otherwise... romance buffs who like their love complicated, a little ugly, and very sexy may appreciate Sarah and Wes' powerful if flawed connection." - Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books  
"Recommend for fans of Lisa McMann's 'Wake' series." - School Library Journal

Mackenzie Cadenhead is the author of the middle grade fantasy novel *Sally's Bones* and co-author of the upcoming young reader series *Marvel's Super Hero Adventures*. She is a trained dramaturg and former editor for Marvel comics. She lives in New York with her family and has at least one totally crazy dream a week. Visit her at [mackenziecadenhead.com](http://mackenziecadenhead.com)

Every teenager wishes they had a superpower, and every adult knows that power creates as many problems as it solves. I loved taking this journey with Sarah - from embarrassment about her abnormality, to delight at its potential, to near-monster, to heroine. She's funny and smart and dumb and frustrating that way all teenagers are, and she feels very real and so well-written. I'm a big fan of stories where the fantasy elements are rooted in fact, and the author has taken an extremely believable scenario - a new medicine for a sleep disorder - and used it as a vehicle for a coming of age story with great characters, surprising twists (no spoilers but something happens to a secondary character that I did not see coming), and a super satisfying ending. Not only did I enjoy it, this is a book I will pass on to my daughter - I think there's a lot of fodder for good conversations. I hope there's a sequel!

Super fun YA thriller I had a hard time putting down! Exactly the kind of book my 13-year-old self would have loved!

"*Sleeper* is a unique YA thriller- that wasn't like I expected from the summary. Sarah is a high schooler who suffers from REM sleep disorder, where she physically acts out her dreams. While she has tried therapies in the past, nothing seems to work except putting her into restraints at night. This has been a killer to her social life. One night, she pushes her limits and hangs out with her friends from lacrosse, including Gigi, the most popular girl in school. Unfortunately, they all fall asleep. Sarah is dreaming of a deer she needs to put out of its misery while a shirtless hot guy watches, when suddenly she hears shouts telling her to wake up. When she does, she's confronted with Gigi in her death grip. Being the stereotypical mean/popular girl, Gigi sets out (and does) make Sarah's life a nightmare for her unconscious disease. To make things more complicated, the guy from her dream turns up at school. When a new drug, Dexid, comes up as a possible trial, Sarah is willing to give it a try- she wants her shot at normalcy. Dexid seems to work- in that it keeps her from moving during her dreams. However, she suddenly begins to see these new creatures, named Burners by Wes.

They are horrifying and chasing her and Wes at every turn. The dream world consists of a train station where they can follow the passengers into their dreams off the trains. The Burners are there to stop them from entering others' dreams. As Sarah learns, this is not all Dexid helps her to do, but it also helps her to possess the dreamer's body and control their actions. When the Burners attack, you wake up into a paralyzed body for a few hours- a fact which becomes terrifying when Sarah witnesses the violation of her body by one of the workers at the sleep center, Josh, and Gigi. This violation sets the stage for her subsequent violation of others when she takes control of their bodies. I would think this book would need warnings for sexual assault. If you don't want to know more about it (this may be considered a spoiler) then skip this, but I want to include for people who might be sensitive. The lack of control over one's body is really a pretty frightening concept, and there is a dubious moment of sexual assault during her paralysis (not clear if she was actually assaulted/how far it went), but this is not handled well, since the Josh is never brought to justice and may be doing any number of things to other sleepers (he comments about them all being zombies, so you can do whatever you want). I found this to be a bit horrifying and wish this was handled better by the characters in the book. The main characters then also sexually assault some classmates (stepsiblings) while on Dexid, and this is never brought to justice either and is really disturbing. The writing is fast-paced and intense, moving quickly and making the book difficult to put down. I felt pretty uncomfortable at the events in the book (particularly what I mention above and the callous attitude towards it all), and for that reason, I'm not sure how I feel about it- I liked the writing style and the idea of the book- but the events were pretty disturbing. The concept of sleep disorders and astral projection is interesting but it is not really clear how the medication gets there (some explanation is offered, but a certain amount of faith is needed). I have some mixed feelings about it overall. It's pretty heavy for a YA book, so I feel this is better suited for an older audience. Please note that I received an ARC from the publisher through netgalley. All opinions are my own.

Sleeper, or Adventures in Experimental Drug Trials as I like to call it, is a thriller with paranormal elements. Sarah has a sleeping disorder that causes her to act out her dreams, which can be preeeeetttty dangerous for people around her. When an experimental drug is suggested by the clinic, she goes for it, and it seems to work, with the small caveat that now she is able to move in and out of a collective dream consciousness with ease. She meets another such dreamer, Wes, who has been through some tough times due to the illness, just like her. Together, they get high on their new relationship and the power associated with their drugs. Now, the plot tackles the aspect of bullying

head-on, with the story resting on a high-school vendetta gone wrong. Sarah is being bullied by her former best friend for attempting to strangle the latter during an episode, and when the opportunity presents to exact her vengeance, she doesn't wait for the dish to get cold. She and Wes jump into people's dreams and their bodies and violate their privacy and well, bodies. Sarah grows more and more hesitant as the plot furthers, because Wes starts to up the stakes every time and she realizes that she is a toxic relationship. What the story doesn't completely address, though is sexual and physical assault. Sarah is almost raped by an ex, but she doesn't ever do anything about it. She instead focuses her attentions on the 'mean girl' who spread rumors about her. Sarah and Wes, while in other's bodies, do things that would technically be considered 'roofied' sexual assault. The plot does address the violation of a person's autonomy but not that. Also, the thing between them was nearly insta-lovey, with them declaring destiny and stuff within like a week of knowing each other \*eyeroll\*. And it is kinda weird to imagine all this escalation taking place in a matter of a couple of weeks! The dream consciousness thing was an interesting aspect but isn't explored much, with regards to world-building. And the burners aren't exactly explained. Also, if they could enter the dreams of other dreamers without the drug, why couldn't they do it before (with the exception of one instance)? The plot also leaves the story on a open ending, which I am kind of conflicted about. How much of it was the influence of the drug, and how much was their true nature, and does she still empathize with him? In conclusion, an interesting concept of a book but it should have been executed better.

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