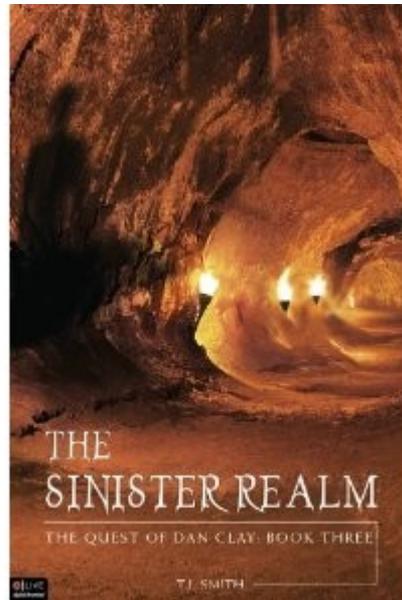


The Sinister Realm



by

T.J. Smith

Reviewed by Tannia E. Ortiz-Lopes, publisher of "Time with Tannia"
(<http://timewithtannia.tripod.com/>)

The Sinister Realm is author T.J. Smith's masterpiece in the popular trilogy, *The Quest of Dan Clay*. The saga begins when Dan steps into *A World Away* and barely makes *The Harrowing Escape* back home. With *The Sinister Realm* the author brings the story to a phenomenal and thought-provoking end with life changes consequences.

The book cover shows the shadow of a being approaching a reddish, dirty and rocky tunnel lighted with torches. This is a depiction of one of the many tunnels that Dan and his companions must go through at *The Sinister Realm* while searching for the portal that will bring them back home.

The book begins with Dan Clay laying on the floor of a cave where transparent beings stepped on him while chasing a golden chest. At first Dan is confused, but then he joins the other cave dwellers in their chase of the golden chest. Suddenly Dan remembers his other friends and decides to find a way out of the cave. To his surprise, the cave exit, just like the golden chest, continues to relocate every time he tries to cross it. Cleverness,

selfless, and blind faith help Dan to escape the Cave of Greed. Once outside the cave, he finds himself at a tunnel lighted with torches. He grabs one of the torches and wonders around other tunnels searching for Sam, William, Brad Blaze, and Father James. His exploration takes Dan to another cave. There he finds Sam fighting with other cave dwellers to reach and climb a ladder that appears to take the successful climber to the cave's exit. During his rescue attempt, Dan accidentally alerts one of the cave's guardians. After some close encounters with death, Dan and Sam find the way out of the Cave of Envy.

Meanwhile, in the travelers' home world, Officer Moore, from the Police Department Missing Persons Unit, has been assigned to investigate the disappearance of Dan and his companions. At first she considers the parents' story about the parallel world and the oak tree located in front of the Church bizarre and ridiculous, but after finding some evidences, although still skeptical, she starts to consider the possibility that the story might be true.

The parents, on the other hand, are outraged and in shock. They cannot believe their children broke their promise of never going back to the parallel world. Nevertheless, as in their first disappearance, they continue to pray under the statue of St. Michael the Archangel after Mass. Father Andreas, the substitute priest, leads them in prayer and helps them to understand their odds dreams. too.

As the story unfolds, together with Sam, Dan continues the search for William, Brad Blaze, and Father James. To their surprise, they found Cindy at the Cave of Pride during their search. She confirms that Jimmy was also tossed inside the wicked oak tree during the last full-moon.

Once Father James is found and rescued from the Cave of Sloth, the travelers are in shock after finding out their location. Although in disbelief, their main concern still is whether or not they would be able to find the portal back home before the next full moon. Despite all odds and strange creatures inhabiting this place, their desire to return home keeps them focused on exploring the other caves in *The Sinister Realm* as they continue to search for William, Brad Blaze, and Jimmy. They found William at the Cave of Wrath, Jimmy at the Cave of Gluttony, and Brad Blaze at the Cave of Lust. After all the travelers have been found, they must concentrate on finding the portal back home since time is running out. According to Jimmy's account of his entrance through the wicked oak tree, the portal is located in a very illuminated room with a carved snake with seven heads on a wooden wall.

After finding the room and the carved snake described by Jimmy, Dan and his companions realized that their faith and courage would soon be tested, and only with Divine intervention would they be able to defeat the room's dweller.

Would they be able to return home and be reunited with their loved ones on the next full-moon? And where is St. Michael, who does not seem to be around during these difficult moments, but who had accompanied them in their parallel world?

Join Dan and his companions as they battle the disguised caverns' guardians, devilish beings, and mythological creatures while searching for their way out of *The Sinister Realm*.

As a book reviewer, one of the advantages of reading the entire trilogy is that I am able to see the author's storytelling abilities mature as the characters and situations in the story get more vivid and complex. From page one, I noticed the author had really mastered the art of fantasy writing for the Young Adult genre. He skillfully weaved his faith and beliefs into the story without preaching or compromising his values.

I highly recommend *The Quest of Dan Clay* trilogy to young adult readers and to parents looking for a young hero with morals and values who conquers his temptations by simply acts of kindness and selfless.

A round of applause to the author for an extraordinary finale to *The Quest of Dan Clay*!



Tannia E. Ortiz-Lopés author of *The Window To My Soul, My Walk With Jesus* (2004 Tate Publishing ISBN 0975393359.) *El Espejo de mi Alma* (2010 Pleasant Word) Visit the author at: <http://timewithtannia.tripod.com/>, www.myspace.com/tanniaortizlopes, and www.shoutlife.com/tanniaortizlopes

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