

The Harrowing Escape



by

TJ Smith

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

The Harrowing Escape is author TJ Smith's second book of ***The Quest of Dan Clay Trilogy***.

The book cover shows a full moon brightly shining behind the branches of a leafless tree with its branches guarding the path leading to the gloomy castle in the background. The tree appears to be saying to uninvited visitors: "I dare you...!"

On the first book, Dan, Jimmy, Cindy, and Sam entered ***A World Away***, through a fallen oak tree located deep into the forbidden Eldritch Forest. In this God's forsaken world, Dan and his companions became friends with Ceremonia, the tree nymph. As they traveled through the wicked Eldritch Forest to the Reclaimers' evil castle, they had to stay focused and work together to endure the challenges and tribulation of their journey. They only had 30 days to accomplish their mission and to return to their world on the next full moon.

On the second book, *The Harrowing Escape*, Dan and his companions are inside the castle. Out of desperation to stay undetected from the evil Reclaimers and other castle's residents, they find themselves in the castle's dungeon. There they meet Salvus, the musician satyr and residence of the dungeon. The author utilizes Salvus and Marcus, the Pedwhips' head cook to share with them valuable information about the castle, the Reclaimers and their pets, Spiritus Malus, and the human residents of the 6th floor.

During their stay Dan, Jimmy, Cindy, and Sam share quarters with Salvus who every night entertains the castle's residents with the music of his lyre. However, their stay proves to be more challenging than Sam and Salvus expected. After all, these curious and brave teens have proven to be a hand-full to Sam during their journey. The first wanderer was Dan, who on their first day, restless and unable to sleep as the others, decides to do some further exploration of the acoustic tunnels located near the dungeon. This exploration leads him to discover a hidden stone staircase leading to the roof with secret entrances to the other floors. On this solo excursion, he ends in the roof where he must fight for his life to avoid becoming the next meal of a giant wasp or a hungry stone gargoyle.

The next morning, Jimmy wakes up earlier. He decides to explore one of the castle's corner staircases while the others sleep and Salvus is picking up their breakfast in the kitchen. His departure is discovered by Cindy. She wakes Dan up as soon as she notices Jimmy is not walking with Salvus. Together they decide to find him before Sam awakes and Salvus is back from the kitchen. Their search takes them to the castle's Library where they find Jimmy. They are all amazed at the great collection of books, a three-dimensional hanging tapestry, and a rest-upon where Dan is trapped. When Salvus returns from the kitchen, he discovers the teenagers are missing and he wakes Sam up. They go to the Library where Salvus rescues Dan from the rest-upon. They all return safely to the dungeon.

During the remainder of their stay in the castle, Dan, his companions, and Salvus develop a plan to reach the sixth floor, look for William, rescue him, and leave the castle with little to none complications. They rehearse their escape while Salvus prepares plenty of food for their journey. On the assigned day, they executed their plan.

After their schemed is discovered, they are hunted down by 40 Reclaimers flying on Oswagi birds. Dan and his companions must seek refuge deep in the forest and keep in the lookout for the Reclaimers and any other predators. When their water and food supply scarce, they are forced to search for water and hunt for their food.

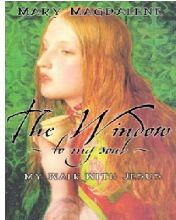
On their return trip, they must fight for their lives against a drunken Centaurus, Oswagi birds, explosive Maskocites, shadows and killer swordfish. They will have to deal with Cindy's metamorphosis and an unexpected betrayal.

Would they be able to find William and rescue him from the evil spell of the Reclaimers and Spiritus Malus control? What will happen to Cindy's metamorphosis? Would they be able to reach the oak tree during the next full moon and avoid an encounter with Spiritus Malus?

This Young Adult (YA) fiction story is a page turner suitable for middle schoolers, as they will be able to identify themselves with the characters. The book, however, is not suitable for younger children as they might get scared by some of the situations.

The author's imagination continues to amaze me as he delivers an entertaining story full of suspense, intrigue, betrayal, and an unforeseen shocking ending.

Join Dan and his companions as they trust divine interception and a warmth hand for guidance in this God's forsaken world as they risk their lives in ***The Harrowing Escape!***



Tannia E. Ortiz-Lopés author of *The Window To My Soul, My Walk With Jesus* (2004 Tate Publishing ISBN 0975393359.) The book could be purchased directly from the publisher at www.tatepublishing.com and at all major online stores.

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