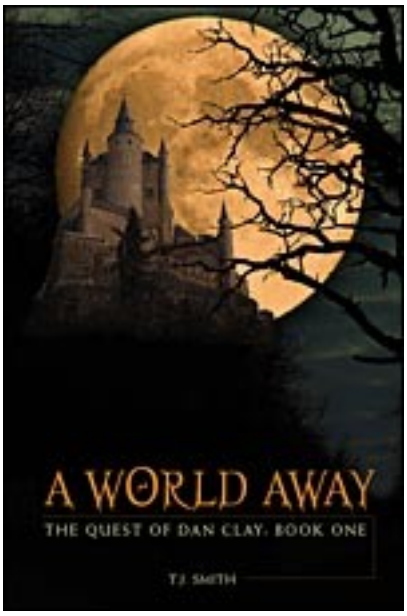
A World Away



by

T.J. Smith

Reviewed by Tannia E. Ortiz-Lopes

Publisher of "Time with Tannia" (http://timewithtannia.tripod.com/)

A World Away is author T.J. Smith's first book of the Dan Clay's leap of faith saga to save his missing older brother, William, from an evil parallel world.

The book cover shows a gloomy castle standing on the top of a mountain surrounded by creepy trees and a bewitched full moon saying to uninvited visitors: beware, beware, beware...!

Dan Clay is a high school senior who looks like a nerd. He is smart, shy, wears glasses, and his non-athletic body makes him the perfect target for the two known school bullies, Sur and Malice.

When Dan finds his science project trashed all over the school's gym floor, all his dreams of obtaining a scholarship are crushed. He storms out of the gym and wanders around town trying to cool-off his rage. Dan is so absorbed in his thoughts that he, unknowingly, enters the forbidden and mythical Eldritch Forest. It's dark and suddenly Dan realizes he is

lost. All of the childhood stories he had heard about demons and mythical beasts among the trees and rocks of the forest start to become real to him. He trembles of fear. He then sits on a fallen tree, looks around and sees a large oak tree. It seems familiar to him, so he walks over to the tree and touches it. Upon touching the tree, his hand penetrates the tree's surface. Curiosity takes the best of him and he places his hand deeper into the tree, when suddenly he hears a loud noise behind him. He gets scared and his glasses fall on the floor. Dan bends down to pick them up when he is pushed into the tree by an invisible force.

Dan is confused and after hearing more noises in the forest, he decides to rush back home. He is more amazed and puzzled after he sees his family celebrating William's 18th birthday. Dan quickly analyzes all the events and concludes that the "tree" plays a key role in his ordeals.

During the first three chapters of the book, Dan is gathering information about his brother, the town's history, and the history of the Eldritch Forest's legend. The author uses Sam White, an old lunatic homeless man, to share with Dan information about Eldritch Forest and the "world beyond the oak tree".

Dan secretly plans to go back to the forest to rescue William. He decides to seize the opportunity while he prepares to attend an after graduation survival camp. The day of the departure, Dan walks to town with his friend and next door neighbor, Jimmy. At the meeting place, after he registers with the bus driver to go to camp, Dan takes advantage of everybody's distraction and walks to Eldritch Forest. Jimmy notices Dan walking away with his bag. He grabs his bag and follows Dan closely. Cindy, a classmate and friend of them, also notices their odd behavior and not wanting to go to survival camp either, follows them from a saved distance. After sharing enough information about Eldritch Forest with Dan, Sam is suspicious and also has a hunch that Dan might venture to return to the other world to save his missing brother, William. On the day of departure to survival camp, Sam keep a close eye on Dan.

Dan goes through the oak tree into the other world and as he is recovering from the experience, suddenly and unexpected falling from the tree come Jimmy, Cindy, and Sam. Dan has no choice but to let his friends stay and join him in his quest. There in the "other world" Sam calls Dr. Mark O'Brien, an old friend of his.

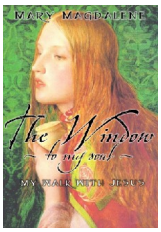
The remainder of the book takes the reader back and forth between both worlds. While Dan and his companions dare to go further and further into the forest, the parents in the other world are devastated about their children sudden and unexpected disappearance.

My hat goes off to this author, whose imagination and creativity will keep the reader engaged in this God forsaken world as Dan and his companions encounter tree nymphs, purple frogs with teeth and very long tongues, a carnivores grass, mean looking moles, a huge snail, a giant spider, a three headed Siberian Tiger, trolls, in addition to other prehistoric and mythological creatures.

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

Will Dan and his companions ever reach the castle where he believes his brother William

is trapped? Will they survive all the tribulations of their journey? For the answers to these and other questions, join Dan, Jimmy, Cindy, and Sam as they travel into the unknown in "A World Away."



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. The author review books for www.catholicfiction.net Visit the author at: http://timewithtannia.tripod.com/, www.myspace.com/tanniaortizlopes, and www.shoutlife.com/tanniaortizlopes

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