

The Sinister Secrets of Singe

Sean Ferrell

Graham Carter, Illustrator

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Sean Ferrell's novel *The Sinister Secrets of Singe* is a complex morality tale—an epic-scale steampunk vision of troubled family relationships.

In the near past, the residents of Liberty bucked for autonomy against their sovereign, only to discover that the robots they commissioned to secure their independence weren't under their control. After the city was savaged by the robots, Alton Physician, their creator, was banished with his robot army to the island of Singe. The wife and child whom he left behind were placed under house arrest.

Alton's son, Noah, grows up unaware of this past. By eleven, he is discontent with the strict rules that govern his days. One day, after his mother leaves for work, he decides that his life as a latchkey kid is over. His rebellion catapults him into a quest to find his father. He faces life-threatening dangers that stem from the unspoken sadness that permeates his home.

Featuring sentient clockwork robots, pirate smugglers, a mad scientist in the jungle, and a powerful governor who's willing to jail children, this high adventure veers between fast action sequences and stolid instances of emotional development. Its connections are sometimes hazy, and its emotions skew toward the negative, complemented by the illustrations' moody colors and warped perspectives. Most of the book's adults are burdened by personal darkness; its robots are fearful to the point of violence. By accident and choice, Noah is left to navigate this emotional quagmire on his own; his naïve choices impact the fates of all to harrowing effect.

In the steampunk adventure novel *The Sinister Secrets of Singe*, what's unexpressed in interpersonal relationships takes the greatest toll of all; the only hope for a better future is to build trust through compassionate curiosity and open expressions of feeling.

LETITIA MONTGOMERY-RODGERS (May / June 2023)

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