

World of Dawn: Arise

Shawn Gale

Xlibris (Mar 14, 2017)

Softcover \$19.99 (244pp)

978-1-5144-3659-2

An appealing novel, World of Dawn employs themes of good and evil, courage and cowardice, and guilt and absolution.

Thoughtful characterization and intriguing world-building come together to make Shawn Gale's *World of Dawn: Arise* an exceptional beginning to what is sure to be a captivating new series.

By the time he is sent to Halton House, a farm for second-chance youth and an alternative to a juvenile detention center, Tanner Kurtz has lived a tumultuous life. Battling guilt for his previous crimes as well as grief for the loss of loved ones, he maintains distance from those around him, tending to lose himself in Western novels.

That all changes when Tanner, his mentor Conroy, Conroy's nieces, and Tanner's housemates Simon and Colby are involved in an accident on the way home from a combative basketball game. In the aftermath, they find themselves in a strange new world with unusual plants, animals, and inhabitants.

The struggle to find their way home tests their loyalty, values, and inner strength. Seemingly thrown back in time and place, Tanner and his companions are forced to leave their old demons behind and face new ones. They often find themselves in deadly situations, facing off against murderous natives and giant snakes, or soaring above oddly shaped trees on the backs of thunder horses.

In *World of Dawn*, Tanner soon recognizes his chance to do the right thing again. Even if he can't right the wrongs of his past, he can determine the path of his future. His journey toward personal absolution is heartfelt and moving.

Gale creates an intriguing alternative world, one in which modern-day attitudes and material accessories have little place or meaning, and a reliance on one's own fortitude and ability to interact with the world is what matters.

Characterization is exceptional, particularly in Tanner's case. Tanner's guilt about his earlier crimes—he helped his uncle rob banks—eats away at him. He is haunted by the repercussions of his actions and the effects they had on the victims: "We'd made it so they cringed when they heard loud noises ... so they had nightmares every night."

The symbolism woven throughout the narrative is clear and effective. The gradual loss of material objects that link the group to their pasts can be seen as a metaphor for a clean slate and release of guilt. When Tanner reads Cormac McCarthy's *All the Pretty Horses*, it serves as a deliberate reflection on Tanner's own journey of self-discovery, including his love of horses and his personal losses. Such metaphors and symbolism help bring the nuances of the tale to life. The work ends with several cliffhangers, setting a captivating foundation for the remainder of the series.

World of Dawn employs themes of good and evil, courage and cowardice, and guilt and absolution in an appealing novel.

JEANNINE CHARTIER HANSCOM (June 16, 2017)

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