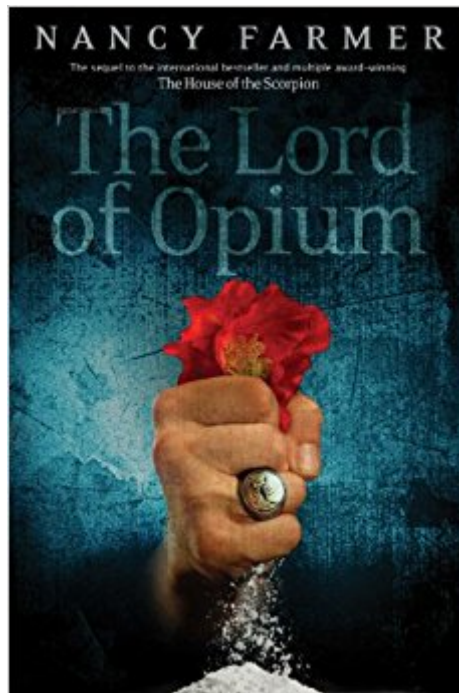




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The Lord Of Opium



Synopsis

As the teenage ruler of his own country, Matt must cope with clones and cartels in this “electric blend of horrors and beauty” (>), the riveting sequel to the modern classic *House of the Scorpion*, winner of the National Book Award, a Newbery Honor, and a Printz Honor. Matt has always been nothing but a clone—grown from a strip of old El Patron’s skin. Now, at age fourteen, he finds himself suddenly thrust into the position of ruling over his own country. The Land of Opium is the largest territory of the Dope Confederacy, which ranges on the map like an intestine from the ruins of San Diego to the ruins of Matamoros. But while Opium thrives, the rest of the world has been devastated by ecological disaster—and hidden in Opium is the cure. And that isn’t all that awaits within the depths of Opium. Matt is haunted by the ubiquitous army of *eejits*, zombielike workers harnessed to the old El Patron’s sinister system of drug growing—people stripped of the very qualities that once made them human. Matt wants to use his newfound power to help, to stop the suffering, but he can’t even find a way to smuggle his childhood love, Maria, across the border and into Opium. Instead, his every move hits a roadblock, some from the enemies that surround him—and some from a voice within himself. For who is Matt really, but the clone of an evil, murderous dictator? Is his true destiny already predetermined by his genes?

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Gr 8 Up—Fourteen-year-old Matteo Alacrán has outlived El Patrón, the drug lord for whom Matt was cloned for parts. The young man steps into the position dominated for decades by El Patrón and attempts to right wrongs long tolerated by the computer-chip-controlled underlings. His mission involves establishing and maintaining order over a drug kingdom he wishes to reform while corralling the genetics experiments that made him possible; subplots, such as a pro forma romance and a newly discovered solution to ecological disaster, diffuse the momentum but expand the moral universe. Complex parallel plotlines come loosely together in a positive conclusion, and while character motivations are sometimes convenient, the identification of friend and foe adds clarity. This sequel to *The House of the Scorpion* (S & S, 2002) does not have the tense pace that distinguished the first title, but the ethical dilemmas that shape the internal action serve to move the plot forward. Matt discovers that good and evil are not always clear-cut as he struggles to gain control over an empire long ago corrupted. Readers of the first book will be able to fill in the background on all that Farmer implies, and will appreciate the continuing stories of familiar characters.—Janice M. Del Negro, GSLIS Dominican University, River Forest, IL (c) Copyright 2013. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Starred Review Matteo Alacrán was created to be an organ donor for El Patrón, but he is spared this fate thanks to El Patrón's death and his assisted escape from Opium, a country between the U.S. and what was once Mexico. Matt has now returned to his nation and taken the reins of power as the new Lord of Opium. With its borders closed, the country's drug supply is piling up and imported resources are running low. Global nations are growing aggressive waiting for their drugs, while others want the natural resources only Opium can supply them—flora, fungi, animals, and other denizens of the preserved ecosystem that thrive there but are destroyed elsewhere. Matt is also trying to achieve his personal goals of stopping the drug trade, growing crops for food, and returning the eejits, Opium's preserved labor force, from their current state as microchipped mindless robots to fully functioning humans, all while making Opium self-sustaining. Most young readers who loved *The House of the Scorpion* (2002) when it was first released are now adults, and today's teen audience will need to read the first title in order to fully understand Farmer's brilliantly realized world. The satisfying ending is left open enough to allow for further stories, and Farmer includes an appendix that links real people and places to the book. A stellar sequel worth the wait. **HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY:** International

best-seller *The House of the Scorpion* took home all the big prizes: the National Book Award, the Newbery Honor, and the Printz Honor. Expect a big national marketing campaign for the sequel (not that it needs one). Grades 7-10. --Suanne Roush --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

I liked this book, but not as much as *The House Of The Scorpion*. It is worth reading as a follow up to that book and I would recommend it. It fills in some blanks that were left open by the first book and in that, I enjoyed it. It just seemed to lack a bit of suspense, for lack of a better word.

I love both parts of Nancy Farmer's story. After a while the suspense (still present) becomes secondary to the emotional response to the main characters, especially Matt. The characters are complex, well observed, changing. I found the part about the horrible "goulag" for orphan boys totally surprising in its truth). It is normal that Orwell observed so well the reality of the so called communism, he saw its atrocities in Spain, but how Nancy got this inside, I don't know. Matt, as a clone of the lord of opium, discovers with awe some of the characteristics of the original model in himself, developing against his will. He also discovers, at 15, what the power implies and how many moral issues it brings with itself. Starting with a beautiful utopia of the young, he meets the obstacles of the reality...The performance of Raul Esparza is as outstanding as always and I found it difficult to part with this audiobook. I will certainly listen to it again, soon.

Feel free to check out my other reviews on Goodreads or my blog: [...] I have read some of the reviews on here for *Lord of Opium* and I see quite a few people who did not like the sequel to *House of the Scorpion*. I am not among that group. I loved this story as much as I loved the first.

I've found recently I enjoy the dystopian style plots of books like this, where the future of the world is just a little different. Nancy Farmer's imagined world includes the US and Aztalan, formerly Mexico, separated by countries run by drug lords including the land of Opium. When we left Matt, he had returned to Opium to find the original El Patron dead, along with most of his guards, family and friends. With him dead, that made Matt, his clone, the next in line to rule the land. Matt wants to tear down the drug cartel and free the ejits, people who have been micro-chipped into submission, but he finds this task difficult. The rest of the world lays in total devastation, pollution and overpopulation have wrecked most of the planet, except for Opium, and it turns out the secret to saving the earth lies in Opium. This book does not contain a lot of the suspenseful moments that *House of the Scorpion* had that kept me riveted. However, I still enjoyed the plot and was happy to be back in this world with Matt, Maria and his group of friends. Lastly, I

received the audio book version of this novel, and it is narrated by actor Raul Esparza, who does a near perfect job of capturing all the characters, the Spanish and different voices. He keeps the story moving, interesting, and helps me to picture the characters not just from the descriptions but from how he voiced them. I don't always find narrators who can really bring a book to life, so it's a joy when one comes along. I'd recommend the book, and especially the audio book version just for that.

As usual, Nancy Farmer's characters and stories fill my every waking hour until the last page of the book. I force myself to slow down so the book will last longer. I've been waiting for this second novel in the series and of course, it did not fail to keep me glued to the digital page. The House of the Scorpion(2010), Farmer's first book taking place in the bizarre land of Opium, left me wanting more. The Lord of Opium delivered me right back into the world of (former) clone, Matteo Alacran, without skipping a beat and continued to take over my own life until the ending. In Lord of Opium, we revisit the vast country of Opium and all the characters that make Farmer's stories so interesting. Only now, it all belongs to Matteo. All the good stuff is inside: Eejits and Safe Horses, force fields and drug lords, friends and enemies. I couldn't wait to see how the young man handled it all. Is Matteo too nice to be mean? Can young Matteo handle the running of a country that Patron built on death and fear, where the good of the whole must be weighed against the good of one? But this book. Buy the first one in the series too. Enough said. Oh yes, and if you haven't read Farmer's other series: The Sea of Trolls Trilogy, do so immediately.

Definitely no where near as good as its predecessor, House of the Scorpion - just in case you had your hopes up. Standalone it is an OK read. The character development seemed to have stopped in the last book, I don't want to give away spoilers. There are a few new ones introduced. It just mostly seems to rest on the laurels of its predecessor's success and doesn't do much to stand out on its own. I was disappointed.

I didn't think Nancy Farmer could outdo The House of the Scorpion (one of my beloved favorites), but The Lord of Opium was magnificent. Also, I love that Raul Esparza comes back to narrate it. He makes the story come alive so well.

This is a very good read! If you read and enjoyed the first novel (House of the Scorpion), you will enjoy this one. I would suggest reading the first novel over again, because The Lord of Opium

jumps in immediately where the House of the Scorpion leaves off (which can be a bit of a shock, since the first novel came out several years ago). The story deals with complex moral issues but in a way that young adult readers can easily understand and think about. It also integrates Mexican culture into the story, which we sometimes do not see in books produced in the USA. I think this (and the first novel) are great books for young adults (and adults!) to read!

I was surprised about the formatting of the plot. A great deal of the book was dedicated to exploring Opium, with the observatory and large swaths of undeveloped land. Nancy Farmer did not do this much in THOS. One thing I didn't like: SPOILER ALERT! The ending was kind of unfulfilling. Why did just then the crops started being replaced? Why did Matteo never travel to the Scorpion Star? And how did that space station control all the eejits? Over all a very good book. I just miss Mirasol.

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