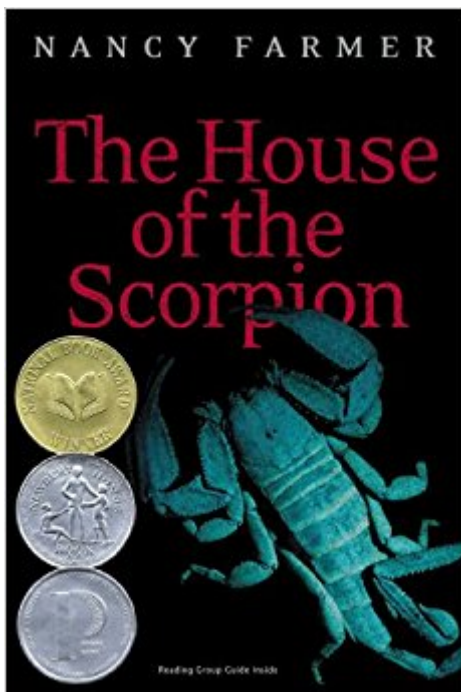


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# The House Of The Scorpion



## Synopsis

Series: National Book Award Winner for Young People's Literature, Newbery Honor Book, Printz Honor Book  
Matteo Alacran was not born; he was harvested. His DNA came from El Patrón, lord of a country called Opium--a strip of poppy fields lying between the United States and what was once called Mexico. Matt's first cell split and divided inside a petri dish. Then he was placed in the womb of a cow, where he continued the miraculous journey from embryo to fetus to baby. He is a boy now, but most consider him a monster--except for El Patrón. El Patrón loves Matt as he loves himself, because Matt is himself. As Matt struggles to understand his existence, he is threatened by a sinister cast of characters, including El Patrón's power-hungry family, and he is surrounded by a dangerous army of bodyguards. Escape is the only chance Matt has to survive. But escape from the Alacran Estate is no guarantee of freedom, because Matt is marked by his difference in ways he doesn't even suspect.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Fields of white opium poppies stretch away over the hills, and uniformed workers bend over the rows, harvesting the juice. This is the empire of Matteo Alacran, a feudal drug lord in the country of Opium, which lies between the United States and Aztlan, formerly Mexico. Field work, or any menial tasks, are done by "eejits," humans in whose brains computer chips have been installed to insure docility. Alacran, or El Patron, has lived 140 years with the help of transplants from a series of clones, a common practice among rich men in this world. The intelligence of clones is usually destroyed at birth, but Matt, the latest of Alacran's doubles, has been spared because he belongs to

El Patron. He grows up in the family's mansion, alternately caged and despised as an animal and pampered and educated as El Patron's favorite. Gradually he realizes the fate that is in store for him, and with the help of Tam Lin, his bluff and kind Scottish bodyguard, he escapes to Aztlan. There he and other "lost children" are trapped in a more subtle kind of slavery before Matt can return to Opium to take his rightful place and transform his country. Nancy Farmer, a two-time Newbery honoree, surpasses even her marvelous novel, *The Ear, The Eye and the Arm* in the breathless action and fascinating characters of *The House of the Scorpion*. Readers will be reminded of Orson Scott Card's *Ender* in Matt's persistence and courage in the face of a world that intends to use him for its own purposes, and of Louis Sachar's *Holes* in the camaraderie of imprisoned boys and the layers of meaning embedded in this irresistibly compelling story. (Ages 12 and older) --Patty Campbell --This text refers to the Audible Audio Edition edition.

Farmer's (*A Girl Named Disaster*; *The Ear, the Eye and the Arm*) novel may be futuristic, but it hits close to home, raising questions of what it means to be human, what is the value of life, and what are the responsibilities of a society. Readers will be hooked from the first page, in which a scientist brings to life one of 36 tiny cells, frozen more than 100 years ago. The result is the protagonist at the novel's center, Matt a clone of El Patron, a powerful drug lord, born Matteo AlacrÃ n to a poor family in a small village in Mexico. El Patron is ruler of Opium, a country that lies between the United States and AztlÃ n, formerly Mexico; its vast poppy fields are tended by eejits, human beings who attempted to flee AztlÃ n, programmed by a computer chip implanted in their brains. With smooth pacing that steadily gathers momentum, Farmer traces Matt's growing awareness of what being a clone of one of the most powerful and feared men on earth entails. Through the kindness of the only two adults who treat Matt like a human Celia, the cook and Matt's guardian in early childhood, and Tam Lin, El Patron's bodyguard Matt experiences firsthand the evils at work in Opium, and the corruptive power of greed ("When he was young, he made a choice, like a tree does when it decides to grow one way or the other... most of his branches are twisted," Tam Lin tells Matt). The author strikes a masterful balance between Matt's idealism and his intelligence. The novel's close may be rushed, and Tam Lin's fate may be confusing to readers, but Farmer grippingly demonstrates that there are no easy answers. The questions she raises will haunt readers long after the final page. Ages 11-14. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Audible Audio Edition edition.

. First of all, I was surprised that this book is recommend for ages 11 and up. It takes place in

Mexico in the future where cloning is possible. Matt is a clone of a massive opium drug lord named El Patron. Clones are bred as slaves and their brains at birth are altered chemically and/or mechanically to obey and serve. Zombie like, the perfect slave. Matt's brain was not altered. His story is about the treatment and purpose of not only himself, but all clones and how they fit in society. And it's terrible. They are treated as cattle. Matt eventually leaves Mexico to the U.S. Here he experiences slavery perceived as a human. The humans are physically beaten and brainwashed to obey by using fear. It really makes you think of how large of an impact cloning can have on a societies morals and ethics. This book is pretty intense and I really enjoyed it. Matt endures a lot through this dark adventure making it a perfect psychological horror.

Pretty good book until the ending. The beginning reminds me a little of the Assassin's Apprentice series with an outcast housed within the walls of a powerful family that the main character is both a part of and yet not at the same time. It is essentially a coming of age novel in the most difficult of circumstances. Some things about the novel were a bit of stretch (politically), but the character development and general plot line were quite convincing and you couldn't help but root for Matt Alcaran. I also liked how the social stigma of Matt's status of a clone was developed and how Tam Lin cuts to the heart of the matter when he tells Matt that in reality there is no difference between people and clones--it's all made up. Can't help but think about the stigmas attached to bastard children in more puritanical societies. At any rate, good book until the entirely implausible ending. It felt like the author got bored and said how can I make a quick happy ending that will lead us into book 2? Not enough to ruin it or make me not recommend it to both youth and adult readers, but still grating after the high quality of the rest of the book. Pick it up off the shelf if you are looking for a thoughtful YA book.

I can remember signing this book out of my school library when I was 12. I grabbed it only because of the scorpion on the front. I remember not being able to put it down. What's amazing is I didn't fully understand the book at that age. Something recently reminded me of it and I had to buy it and see if it had the same effect. I'm now 24 and still loves it to this day. It's so creatively thought out that you're never quite sure what will happen next. And now I've seen there is a sequel and I can't wait to dive into it and be wrapped up by Nancy Farmer once again!

I love this book. There is no other way to explain it. I have read this book over and over again and it never gets old. I am in the middle of reading the second book of the series and I am happy with it so

far. Nancy Farmer does great with keeping the story alive and making sure to constantly keep the book exciting. This book is great for anyone looking for a rather short read with a lot of action, twists, and adventures you won't forget. I was excited when I heard a movie was going to be made about this book, but disappointed when I read the movie description and it didn't sound anything like the book. The book starts with Matteo Alacran, a clone, a thing that looks just like a normal human being, but was not made the same way. Matt was harvested, from the inside of a cow. Matteo is a clone of El Patron, a 130-year-old drug lord in Mexico. Many people treat Matt harshly for being different. But El Patron has such control over everything and anything, no one can touch Matt. As the story progresses, disaster strikes. Well, if you want to know what happens, I suggest picking up a copy of this amazing read at your local bookstore. You will not be disappointed about this Newbery Award winner. The House of the Scorpion has won 3 awards for how great of a book it is. Trust me, this is an amazing book.

House of the Scorpion won just about every award a YA book can win, including the Printz Award and National Book Award. It also took forever to be released in paperback because the hardcover was selling so well. Now, more than ten years after it was first published, it is still a gripping, thought-provoking, exciting read. Young Matteo can not understand why he is kept locked up and hidden away from the world, or why he is so hated by the people on El Patron's estate. He learns that it is because he is a clone created and harvested to provide replacement organs for El Patron, the world's most powerful drug lord. Matteo just wants a family, friends, and a normal life, and two of the employees on the estate treat him as a son. Matteo tries hard to be accepted by the members of El Patron's family, but he is scorned and abused. When El Patron dies, Matteo is no longer needed, and he must flee before he is destroyed. The complex characters and fast pace of House of the Scorpion make it a good choice for reluctant readers. The moral dilemma will inspire some deep critical thinking and deep discussions. Author Nancy Farmer, like all Printz Award winners, has written a novel that challenges YA readers to think about what kind of world we have, and what kind of world we want.

As a Sci-Fi fan, this book was not as out there as most, but was a very good thought-provoking futuristic earth scenario.

This is classified as a Young Reader book, but as an adult, I loved it! My 7th Grade son asked me to read this along with him (he had to read it for school), and we really enjoyed discussing the rich

characters and the globally controversial topics interwoven into such an attention-grabbing story. We can't wait to read the second book that follows Matt (the main character)!

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