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# The Lord of Opium

By Nancy Farmer



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**The Lord of Opium** By Nancy Farmer

**As the teenage ruler of his own country, Matt must cope with clones and cartels in this 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?



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## The Lord of Opium By Nancy Farmer Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

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, ILα(c) Copyright 2013. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

From [Booklist](#)

\*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

## Review

"Farmer introduces some vivid new characters to her already colorful cast, enlarges the scope of her world-building, and eschews the quest plot that characterizes most of her work for a more nuanced one of mystery and intrigue. Yet ethical dilemmas remain at the heart of this novel, and, if anything, become elevated because of Matt's newfound power and responsibility. . . . The landscape of dystopian literature has changed significantly since the first book, but this sequel is still a cut above the rest." (Jonathan Hunt - *Hornbook* 9/18/2013)

"This sequel to the award-winning *House Of The Scorpion* . . . is both science fiction and a reflection of contemporary issues. Politically savvy teens will recognize the dilemma of leaders caught in an intricate web of choices and consequences (Guantanamo, anyone?). Cloning, legalization of drugs, environmental

degradation, runaway technology--all make an unsettling appearance. . . . The story is stronger and more cohesive, the moral questions more subtle than in *House Of The Scorpion*." (Kathleen Beck - VOYA)

"In the much-anticipated sequel to *The House of the Scorpion* (2002), 14-year-old Matteo Alacrán returns home as the new Lord of Opium.... A vividly imagined tale of a future world full of fascinating characters and moral themes—a tremendous backdrop for one young man's search for identity." (*Kirkus Reviews*, April 10, 2013)

\* "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.... A stellar sequel worth the wait." (*Booklist*, June 1, 2013, \*STARRED REVIEW)

\* "This highly anticipated sequel to Farmer's National Book Award-winning *The House of the Scorpion* (2002) begins soon after the funeral of the drug lord El Patrón and the murder of nearly everyone who attended the event. Fourteen-year-old Matt, the dead drug lord's clone, was originally created to provide spare parts for El Patrón, but is now the Lord of Opium.... Once again, Farmer's near-future world offers an electric blend of horrors and beauty. Lyrically written and filled with well-rounded, sometimes thorny characters, this superb novel is well worth the wait." (*Publishers Weekly*, June 24, 2013, \*STARRED REVIEW)

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **James Ponce:**

Why don't make it to become your habit? Right now, try to prepare your time to do the important behave, like looking for your favorite reserve and reading a book. Beside you can solve your condition; you can add your knowledge by the publication entitled *The Lord of Opium*. Try to face the book *The Lord of Opium* as your buddy. It means that it can to become your friend when you really feel alone and beside associated with course make you smarter than ever. Yeah, it is very fortunated for you personally. The book makes you more confidence because you can know anything by the book. So , let's make new experience along with knowledge with this book.

#### **Mark Blanding:**

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#### **Brent Campbell:**

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**Maria Green:**

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