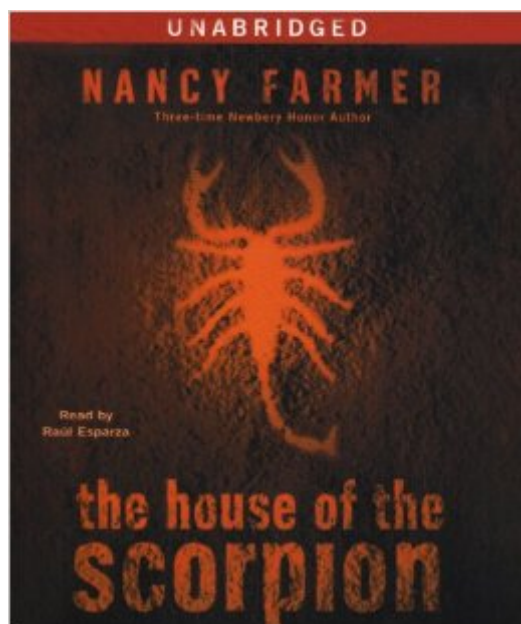


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# The House Of The Scorpion



## Synopsis

Matteo Alacrn was not born; he was harvested. His DNA came from El Patrn, 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 Patrn. El Patrn 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 Patrn'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 Alacrn Estate is no guarantee of freedom, because Matt is marked by his difference in ways he doesn't even suspect.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 0660 (What's this?)

Audio CD: 9 pages

Publisher: Simon & Schuster Audio; Unabridged edition (October 21, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0743572467

ISBN-13: 978-0743572460

Product Dimensions: 5 x 1.2 x 5.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (654 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,124,220 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #364 in [Books > Books on CD >](#)

[Children's Fiction > Fantasy](#) #612 in [Books > Books on CD > Children's Fiction > General](#)

#12843 in [Books > Children's Books > Science, Nature & How It Works](#)

Age Range: 11 - 15 years

Grade Level: 6 - 10

## Customer Reviews

This is YA fiction at its best: an epic story about life-changing events and human strength, appropriate for middle schoolers but totally readable for any teen or adult reader, and a book that can be enjoyed by male or female readers. The protagonist, Matteo, is male, but the story is universal and not to be missed by any literature fan. This is one of those books that can change a middle schooler from a non-reader to a reader. The story unfolds gradually, as we learn about Matt

and his life as a clone, a second-class citizen, growing up in the sprawling mansion of rich and powerful feudal drug lord El Patron, the man from whose DNA Matt was cloned. Matt is unsure of his place in the world, and he needs to learn about the inner workings of the household and its members, the robot-like people who farm opium, the politics of the land El Patron rules between the US and Mexico, as well as Matt's own purpose in life (why did El Patron make a clone? Is Matt his ultimate heir or is there a darker purpose?). The reader is along for Matt's journey of self-discovery, as he figures out who to trust and where the real truth lies. Along the way, Matt finds love as well as boyhood friendship and bonding. There's an important lesson in here about the fate of those who grow up inside cults: When Matt figures out what is right and wrong in the world, will he be able to make the right choice and reject the powerful but evil man who brought him into this world? What if your hero is a kind man to you, but reviled by the rest of the world? Another interesting aspect of the story is the way the future echoes the past.

The House of the Scorpion, written by Newbery Honor book author, Nancy Farmer, has earned the National Book Award and is a Junior Library Guild Selection. An excellent example of literary merit, this novel draws you into its unique settings and expansive characters. You truly feel as if you are lost in the Poppy Fields in the midday heat on El Patron's estate or coughing and itching along with Matt as he endures months of captivity in a room filled with chicken litter and roaches. Farmer's characters are so believable you find yourself feeling compassion for a clone, and anger at those who treat him as anything less than human. Farmer cleverly uses figurative language and understatement to slowly build your curiosity and the suspense. You struggle along with Matt as he attempts to understand his purpose and what those who love him are trying desperately to convey to him. "So many hints! So many clues! Like a pebble that starts an avalanche, Matt's fear shook loose more and more memories. Why had Tam Lin given him a chest full of supplies and maps? Why had Maria run from him when they found MacGregor's clone in the hospital? Because she knew! They all knew!" The characters never are able to tell Matt directly what he so desperately wants to know. "They're looking for you everywhere..... They've sent bodyguards to comb the stables and fields..... 'Why are they looking for me?' (Matt desperately wants to know.) 'You have to know. Tam Lin said you were too clever not to figure it out.' Matt felt turned to stone. The bodyguard evidently gave him more credit than he deserved. Matt hadn't figured it out- not really-until a few minutes ago." Although this book has a science fictional flair to it, it appeals to a wider range of readers including those who enjoy suspense and mysteries.

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