

The House of the Scorpion Study Guide

The House of the Scorpion by Nancy Farmer

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

The House of the Scorpion Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Section 1: Chapters 1, 2 & 3.....	4
Section 2: Chapters 4 & 5.....	6
Section 3: Chapters 6 & 7.....	8
Section 4: Chapters 8, 9 & 10.....	10
Section 5: Chapters 11 & 12.....	12
Section 6: Chapters 13 and 14.....	14
Section 7: Chapters 15, 16 & 17.....	16
Section 8: Chapters 18, 19 & 20.....	18
Section 9: Chapters 21 and 22.....	20
Section 10: Chapters 23, 24 & 25.....	22
Section 11: Chapters 26 & 27.....	24
Section 12: Chapters 28, 29 & 30.....	26
Section 13: Chapters 31, 32 & 33.....	28
Section 14: Chapters 34 & 35.....	30
Section 15: Chapters 36, 37 & 38.....	32
Characters.....	35
Objects/Places.....	40
Themes.....	42
Style.....	44
Quotes.....	47
Topics for Discussion.....	52

Plot Summary

The House of the Scorpion by Nancy Farmer is an intriguing story about a young man who discovers he is a clone and must struggle to learn what this means. Matteo Alacran, a clone harvested from the DNA of El Patron, the Master of Opium, is treated poorly by the Alacran family and servants, despite his superior education and his attempts to fit in. After escaping death by fleeing to the neighboring nation of Atzlan, Matt faces isolation for reasons he never imagined. The House of the Scorpion is an entertaining and thoroughly enjoyable novel.

Matt lives isolated in a house in the middle of the poppy fields with Celia. When children appear outside the window and try to talk to him, Matt breaks the window and jumps out, cutting himself on the glass. The children carry him to the Big House on the Alacran Estate to see the doctor, but when Mr. Alacran recognizes Matt as El Patron's clone, he puts Rosa in charge of Matt. Rosa imprisons Matt in a room filled with sawdust, treating him like an animal, but when Celia finds out what is going on, she contacts El Patron who rescues Matt and forbids anyone to treat Matt poorly. Matt is educated and raised in the Big House, but the Alacrans and their servants ignore him as much as possible. Maria Mendoza is Matt's only friend near his age. Tam Lin, his bodyguard, teaches him a bit about life outside of the poppy fields. El Patron loves Matt because Matt is El Patron.

When Matt learns that clones are created to harvest body organs, he is distraught, but he convinces himself that El Patron would not waste resources educating him if he is supposed to be used for spare parts. During Steven and Emilia's wedding, El Patron has a heart attack, and though Maria tries to save him, Matt is captured and taken to the hospital so that he can be used for El Patron's heart transplant. Since Celia has poisoned Matt with arsenic, El Patron cannot use his heart, and he dies. Mr. Alacran orders Tam Lin to destroy Matt, but instead, Tam Lin sends Matt to Atzlan to find Maria.

When Matt escapes Opium, the Keepers take responsibility for him, sending him to work in the plankton factory near San Luis where he is mocked as an aristocrat. After escaping his intended death in the boneyard, Matt escapes from the plankton factory with three friends and finally reaches the convent of Santa Clara where Maria resides. Esperanza, Maria's mother, sends Matt to Opium to investigate the lockdown that has been in effect since El Patron's death because only Matt can override the system since he shares El Patron's DNA. At the Big House, Matt is reunited with Celia who tells him how everyone at El Patron's wake, including Tam Lin, was killed by poisoned wine because El Patron wanted to be buried with all of his possessions, including people. Since the original Matteo Alacran, El Patron, died, Matt is now the Master of Opium, and he prepares to take responsibility and correct the evils that his predecessor committed.



Section 1: Chapters 1, 2 & 3

Section 1: Chapters 1, 2 & 3 Summary

The House of the Scorpion by Nancy Farmer is an intriguing story about a young man who discovers he is a clone and must struggle to learn what this means. Matteo Alacran, a clone harvested from the DNA of El Patron, the Master of Opium, is treated poorly by the Alacran family and servants, despite his superior education and his attempts to fit in. After escaping death by fleeing to the neighboring nation of Atzlan, Matt faces isolation for reasons he never imagined. The House of the Scorpion is an entertaining and thoroughly enjoyable novel.

In Youth, Chapter 1: In The Beginning, Eduardo worries about the cells under the microscope, fearing what will happen to his family if he fails and is sent to the Farm. After being implanted into a cow, only one embryo grows until it resembles an infant, and when the infant is born, a senior technician forbids Eduardo to inject it with the needle that would blunt its intelligence because "it's a Matteo Alacran. They're always left intact" (p. 4). In Chapter 2: The Little House In The Poppy Fields, the house feels lonely while Celia is at work, and Matt cannot leave the house surrounded by poppy fields. After playing with his stuffed animals and watching television, Matt is swept with such an intense feeling of desolation that he begins to cry. He hears a child's voice and runs to the window where he sees a girl and a boy with their faces pressed against the window. Matt is frozen in terror and cannot respond to their questions, so the children walk away arguing about whether or not to tell the boy's father, the master of the estate. Matt is frightened after seeing the children and, knowing that Celia will be mad if he admits to showing himself at the window, decides to keep it a secret. After dinner, Matt asks Celia to tell him about the children at the Big House again, and she tells Matt about the selfish brats in the Big House. From Celia's descriptions of the children, Matt ascertains that the children who came to the window must have been Steven and Emilia. After Celia tucks Matt into bed, Matt considers what to say if the strange children reappear, and he practices several sentences, deciding to ask them to play, as he drifts off to sleep.

In Chapter 3: Property Of The Alacran Estate, Matt spends the day waiting for the children while Celia is working, and just before sunset, after he had given up all hope, he hears voices approaching. Emilia shows him to her younger sister, Maria, and suggests he may talk to Maria since they are around the same age. Maria is upset that Steven and Emilia brought her far across the fields to see a boy who will not even talk, and she refuses to walk home when Emilia claims they must get back to the house before dark. The others, refusing to carry Maria, walk away, leaving Matt appalled and frightened for Maria's safety outside in the dark since Celia will not be home for hours. Wanting to save Maria, Matt shatters the glass and jumps through the window, but his feet are cut by the glass outside since he is not wearing shoes. Steven pulls Matt away from the glass, but Matt faints as Steven pulls the glass from Matt's wounds. Matt wakes to Steven carrying him across the field to the Big House because, luckily, the doctor is



spending the night there. At the Big House, Rosa, the housekeeper, carries Matt into a beautiful room and starts cleaning him up and removing the glass from his feet. Maria notices that there is writing on Matt's foot, and Emilia reads "Property of the Alacran Estate" (p. 23). A large, fierce-looking man bursts into the room and yells for Rosa to remove Matt from the house, his whisper causing a look of horror to cross her face. Rosa scoops Matt up and roughly dumps him on the lawn.

Section 1: Chapters 1, 2 & 3 Analysis

The first five chapters cover Matt's Youth, the years before he turns seven years old. In the first chapter, a technician monitors the creation, implantation and growth of cells that become a clone. Eventually this baby is born, but Eduardo is commanded not to destroy its brain because it is a Matteo Alacran, foreshadowing the importance of this name as well as the fact that this clone is different from others because its brain is not destroyed. Eduardo wonders if he has done the child a favor, indicating that perhaps leaving its brain intact will be more harmful in the long run. In the second chapter, Matt is introduced. He lives in a house in the middle of the poppy fields with Celia, and he hates that she leaves him every day. He laments the fact that he has never seen real children in person, but when children appear at the window, Matt is too surprised to talk to them. When Celia returns, she chides Matt when he calls her "mama", reminding him that she is not his real mother but assuring him that she loves him dearly, though he has only been loaned to her. Matt worries that whoever loaned him to Celia might want him back some day, foreshadowing later events. Celia tells Matt about the children at the Big House, foreshadowing his future interaction with the children, and Matt correctly ascertains who appeared at the window earlier in the day. Celia's description of Tom foreshadows his malicious nature which is seen throughout the novel. Matt waits for the children to return in the next chapter, but when they finally do, he is rendered speechless yet again when Maria asks him to play because he had intended to ask them to play and does not know what else to say. The children want him to unlock the door, but Matt signals that he does not have a key. Maria pouts that Matt will not come out and play with her after she walked the long way across the fields, but when the older children act like they have left her, Matt breaks the window and jumps through. He is injured because he is not wearing shoes, and Steven carries Matt to the Big House since the doctor is staying the night there. Unfortunately, as Rosa begins tending Matt, a stern man enters and yells at Steven for defiling the house. When Rosa objects to taking the injured boy outside, the man whispers in her ear, causing a look of horror to cross her face, and she immediately complies with his command. This foreshadows the discovery of Matt's difference from the other children as well as the alienation he will suffer as a result of being a clone.



Section 2: Chapters 4 & 5

Section 2: Chapters 4 & 5 Summary

In Chapter 4: Maria, as Matt lies on the grass wishing Celia would rescue him, the children approach, and Steven claims that Matt is a clone but is different from other clones since the technicians did not destroy Matt's mind because El Patron wanted his clone to grow up like a real boy. The fierce man and the doctor appear and take Matt to the servants' quarters for the doctor to operate, and Rosa holds Matt down while the doctor removes the glass from Matt's feet with tweezers. Matt hopes Celia will come soon, but Rosa tells him that the doctor has forbidden Celia to see him. Frightened and alone, Matt cries himself to sleep because he misses Celia, but he awakes to the sound of the door opening. Maria brings Matt food and talks to him. After Matt tells Maria about the terrifying chupacabras that lurk in the night, Maria decides she must spend the night with Matt to avoid being eaten by the monsters. In the morning, Rosa enters the room and yells that Maria will be sent home for associating with Matt.

In Chapter 5: Prison, Rosa tells Matt that Maria will never return when she brings his dinner that night. The doctor, Willum, visits daily, talking and flirting with Rosa but ignoring Matt. When Willum leaves to care for El Patron, Rosa furiously blames Matt and threatens to kill him. She removes his bed, has a barricade built across the door, and dumps sawdust in the room since "that's what dirty beasts get to live in" (p. 42). Willum is shocked at Matt's new environment when he returns, and he is also surprised that Matt no longer talks since he thought the clone was brighter than most. The days pass slowly as Matt plays with the sawdust and bugs that lurk inside of it; though he misses Celia, he finally realizes that she will not rescue him. Tom comes to the door and demands that Matt do something that he can report to Maria, but Matt throws a rotten orange in Tom's face because the boy mocks him. Tom returns with a peashooter, and the peas sting Matt's bare body. Shortly afterward, Celia appears at the window with Maria. She promises to get Matt out, but Matt can only stare at Celia and Maria, feeling their appearance is too good to be true.

Section 2: Chapters 4 & 5 Analysis

Matt wishes Celia would come get him, but the children follow him outside instead. Steven explains that Matt is a clone which is comparable to an animal. Steven further claims that El Patron wanted his clone to grow up like a real boy, introducing El Patron indirectly as a powerful man and the original after whom Matt was cloned. Though Maria still wants to play with Matt, Emilia warns her younger sister away, claiming he is a dangerous animal. The stern man and the doctor retrieve Matt and tend to his wounds because the doctor is responsible for his health, indicating that someone cares about Matt in some way. Rosa locks Matt up and tells him that the doctor has forbidden Celia to visit him, so Matt is desolate and lonely since he has never been forced to go to bed alone before. Luckily, Maria sneaks into his room to talk to him, and Matt likes Maria



because she is his size and does not make him feel bad about being a clone, though he does not know what a clone actually is; however, Rosa returns the next morning and yells at Matt and Maria for associating with one another, and Maria is sent away to prevent her from maintaining a friendship with the clone. In Chapter 5, Rosa taunts Matt that Maria will never return, and when Willum leaves to tend to El Patron, she blames Matt and threatens to kill him. She rearranges his room, treating him like an animal. Although Willum is shocked when he returns, and though he notices that Matt no longer talks, he does not object to the way that Rosa treats Matt. Matt entertains himself with his surroundings, causing Rosa to continue her taunts. Tom comes to torment Matt, and after Matt throws a rotten orange at him, Tom retaliates by shooting Matt with a peashooter. Apparently, Tom reports what has happened to Maria who passes the information on to Celia. Although Matt has lost all hope that Celia will rescue him, Celia and Maria visit Matt one day. Celia is outraged that he has been starved and treated so poorly, claiming that she had been told that Matt was with El Patron. Celia promises to rescue Matt, but Matt's spirit has been beaten and he does not believe her. He is relieved when Celia and Maria leave since they had been an intrusion on his orderly world.



Section 3: Chapters 6 & 7

Section 3: Chapters 6 & 7 Summary

In Middle Ages: 7-11, Chapter 6: El Patron, Rosa dresses Matt and leads him across the courtyard, threatening to kill him if he says anything about her. When they finally reach a large room, an old man's voice summons Matt to come closer, and Matt is relieved to see Celia who assures him it will be alright. Celia tells El Patron that Matt has been kept like a wild animal for six months, and El Patron angrily summons Willum who states Matt suffers from malnutrition but claims to have known nothing about it. After Celia hugs Matt and assures El Patron that he can talk and is very intelligent, El Patron sends Celia and Willum away so he can talk to Matt. El Patron tells Matt about his poverty-stricken childhood in Atzlan, formerly Mexico, and how his seven siblings died before reaching childhood until only he was left alive, filled with a burning desire to survive. When El Patron falls asleep, Celia retrieves Matt and takes him to her new apartment in the Big House. Celia dresses Matt and leads him to the front of the Big House where everyone is gathered to tell El Patron good-bye. El Patron tells everyone that Matt is his clone and the most important person in his life, and as such, anyone who mistreats Matt will be dealt with severely. Leaving Tam Lin as a bodyguard for Matt, El Patron bids Matt farewell until next time as everyone assures the old man of their fond regards.

In Chapter 7: Teacher, Matt hates how Tom constantly follows Maria to Celia's apartment to torment them. Because Matt develops a cough, Willum visits frequently, but sometimes, Matt fakes a cough to send Celia and Maria into a panic in order to assure himself that someone cares about him. When Maria says good-bye to Matt before leaving for school, Matt shoves her away because he is angry that she insists upon being friends with Tom. Tam Lin chides Matt for being mean to Maria and warns him to be nice or he will grow up to be like El Patron. A teacher is hired for Matt, but she teaches the same lesson every day, and Matt explodes in anger on the sixth day, telling her he is a bad clone, he hates counting, and he hates her. Tam Lin rushes into the room, praising Teacher for making Matt talk and comforting her tears. Matt is so startled that he talked that he stops crying. Tan Lin tells Matt they are going on a picnic to celebrate the fact that Matt is talking.

Section 3: Chapters 6 & 7 Analysis

Chapter 6 begins the second section of the novel, Matt's life between the ages of seven and eleven. Rosa threatens Matt as she leads him to a strange room, but Matt is comforted when he finds Celia in the room. Celia reports the details of Matt's confinement to an old man, El Patron, and El Patron is angry to hear how Matt has been treated. After Willum reports that Matt suffers from malnutrition, guards seize Rosa, and it is obvious that she will be punished for the way she had treated Matt. El Patron tells Matt about his childhood, and this story foreshadows the reason for many of El Patron's decisions. Matt is glad to be taken to Celia's apartment. Maria visits him and tries to



encourage him to talk, but Celia says it may take a while for him to overcome the trauma of his imprisonment. When El Patron takes his leave, he clearly states that Matt is more important than anyone in his family, though the reason is yet to be discovered. Since the Alacrans are forbidden to mistreat Matt, they begin ignoring him as soon as El Patron leaves. In the next chapter, Matt does not get along with Tom, foreshadowing the repetitive nature of their animosity toward one another. Tam Lin breaks up a fight between Matt and Tom after Tom smacks Maria in the face with a teddy bear and insults Matt, but Tam Lin assures Matt he does not like Tom, the "unnatural little weevil" (p. 67). When Matt is mean to Maria for being friends with Tom, Tam Lin scolds him for being mean, warning that he will grow into a mean man if he is a mean boy. Matt never thought that he might stay mean forever if he is mean now. When the other children in the Big House leave for school, Matt wonders about the difference between children and clones. A teacher is hired to school Matt, but she repeats the same lesson every day until Matt grows frustrated and yells at her. Tam Lin comforts Teacher and praises Matt for finally talking for the first time since his imprisonment. Matt is excited and knows Celia will be proud that he is speaking again. He plans to become the best student in the world so the other children will like him. Matt is very excited when Tam Lin offers to take him on a picnic to celebrate the fact that he is talking again.



Section 4: Chapters 8, 9 & 10

Section 4: Chapters 8, 9 & 10 Summary

In Chapter 8: The Eejit In The Dry Field, Matt excitedly chatters about everything he sees as he rides through the poppy fields with Tam Lin. When they reach the hills that border the fields, they dismount and walk the rest of the way to a small valley with a pool of water in its center. Tam Lin explains that Matt is El Patron's clone; skin had been taken from El Patron and grown into a new baby, so Matt is exactly like El Patron when he was seven years old. Since no school would accept a clone and no private teacher would teach a clone, the Alacrans hired an eejit, a person with an implant in their head who can only do simple things, to teach Matt. Matt and Tam Lin spend the rest of the afternoon in the valley with Tam Lin teaching Matt about nature.

In Chapter 9: The Secret Passage, Matt's life settles into a peaceful rhythm, and he learns from the television, receiving excellent grades that earn Celia and Maria's praise; however, Matt feels hollow underneath because he understands that he is only a photograph of a human. When Maria is not visiting, Matt amuses himself by exploring the house, and he often hides behind the potted plants to listen to Felicia, Mrs. Alacran, play the piano. Matt ventures near the piano to try playing one day when she does not arrive at the normal time, but when he hears her approach, he hides in a dusty closet. He flips a light switch, and part of the wall slides open to reveal a secret passage. Matt explores his new domain slowly over the next few weeks, finding peepholes and entrances to other closets. When Felicia leaves the piano early one day, Matt presses a piano key, and after that, he studies the comings and goings of the servants to determine when it is safe to visit the music room. One day, Tam Lin catches Matt playing the piano, and he hires Mr. Ortega to teach Matt.

In Chapter 10: A Cat With Nine Lives, Maria tells Matt that it is El Patron's birthday, and Celia rushes into the room to remind Matt that he is sitting next to El Patron tonight, instructing him to come straight to her in the pantry if anything bad happens. Though Maria insists on taking Furball to dinner, she cannot find him, and when Matt finds the dog in the toilet with the lid shut, he is sure Tom put him there so he comes up with a plan. The garden is set up for the party, and guests wander around. El Patron welcomes his guests, particularly his close friend, Mr. MacGregor, to his one hundred, forty-third birthday party.

Section 4: Chapters 8, 9 & 10 Analysis

As Matt and Tam Lin ride through the poppy fields in Chapter 8, Matt points out a man laying on the ground, but when Tam Lin checks the man, he says it is too late because the man is already dead. When Tam Lin takes Matt to the oasis, he explains what a clone is and how Matt is a clone of El Patron. He further explains that an eejit is a person with an implant in their head, such as Teacher and the dead man in the field.



The eejit in the field died because he worked continually since no one told him to rest or drink. The fact that Tam Lin teaches Matt about nature shows his love for Matt and foreshadows the need for Matt to know how to survive on his own.

In Chapter 9, Matt excels in school, and Celia and Maria are proud of him. He hates Furball, Maria's dog, because everyone assumes Matt and Furball are both unimportant animals. Matt grows interested in music and secretly listens to Felicia play the piano. This leads to the discovery of the secret passage which plays a large role in Matt's life later in the novel. When Tam Lin realizes Matt is interested in learning to play the piano, he convinces El Patron to hire a music teacher for Matt. No respectable music teacher will teach a clone, though, so they hire Mr. Ortega, a deaf man who is desperate for work. Before long, Matt is able to add musical ability to his list of accomplishments. "He was in a rage to learn. He would excel, and then everyone would love him and forget he was a clone" (p. 91). Before El Patron's birthday party, Celia tells Matt to come to her immediately if anything bad happens, and Matt does not understand what she means. Hugging Matt and crying, Celia tells him she loves him, but it would only make things worse if he understood. When Matt realizes that Tom tried to drown Furball in the toilet, he comes up with an idea. Although Matt's opinion usually does not matter, a delightful plan occurs to him since El Patron's annual birthday party had turned into a celebration for Matt as well and no one dares risk angering El Patron by ignoring Matt. At the party, Matt observes the guests. The farmers who rule the drug empire hover around a man Matt has not seen before, Mr. MacGregor, and Matt is repulsed by Mr. MacGregor, though he does not know why. This foreshadows Matt's discovery of how wicked MacGregor is, as well as who he resembles which likely contributes to Matt's aversion. After welcoming his guests, El Patron recounts the story of his youth, and though everyone has heard the story many times, they all listen attentively. They clap when he tells them to do so, and El Patron mutters that they are all sheep. He announces that he will rest before they eat dinner, securely establishing his identity as the leader of Opium.



Section 5: Chapters 11 & 12

Section 5: Chapters 11 & 12 Summary

In Chapter 11: The Giving and Taking of Gifts, as Matt wanders around the garden, he moves Tom's place card to the baby table, but this makes Maria angry. After dinner, El Patron tells Matt he can tell how much someone loves him by the size of their gift as he opens the elaborate gifts everyone had given him. Matt opens gifts from El Patron and Celia, but Maria decides not to give a gift to him, flinging it away. Matt, intending to punish her for insulting him in front of everyone, insists she bring it to him and give him a birthday kiss. When Senator Mendoza objects because Matt is a clone, El Patron grows dark and dangerous in anger, making Matt sorry for starting the whole affair. After kissing Matt, Maria runs to her father in tears, and he carries her away. Returning to Celia's apartment, Matt opens Maria's gift, a box of taffy she made with her own hands, but he feels terrible looking at the gift, so he puts it away and crawls under the covers with his stuffed bear.

In Chapter 12: The Thing On The Bed, Matt knows he must make up with Maria, but he also knows she needs time to cool off. He is surprised when Felicia visits and claims she wants to help him. Maria cried all night and wants to see Matt, but since her father has forbidden it, Matt must go to her at the hospital. Matt finds Maria in the waiting room at the hospital, but she claims the meeting is his idea and she does not know why she should forgive him at all. Matt apologizes for his actions at the party and praises her gift. Tom appears, claiming he is glad they are both there because he wants to show them something scarier than anything they have ever seen before. When they hear mewling in the distance, Maria believes they are experimenting on cats and insists on rescuing the animals. Tom opens the closed door from where the sound seems to be coming and reveals a boy strapped to the bed making the noises. Tom says it is MacGregor's clone, not a boy, and he comforts Maria, leading her away and leaving Matt with the clone. Matt follows and tries to comfort Maria, but she refuses to let him touch her. Tom leads Maria away triumphantly while Matt listens to the clone in dejection before following them.

Section 5: Chapters 11 & 12 Analysis

In Chapter 11, Matt retaliates against Tom for trying to drown Furball by moving his place card to the baby table, knowing that El Patron will support his attack against an enemy and that no one will dare to defy El Patron. Unfortunately, Maria cries because she wants to be with Tom, and when Tam Lin promises to make sure Tom receives the same food as the rest of them, Matt orders him not to do so. El Patron is pleased because Matt is acting like him, but Tam Lin and Maria both seem disappointed and angry with Matt. Felicia is also upset about how Matt treats Tom at the birthday party, foreshadowing her revenge against Matt later. El Patron's materialistic beliefs are evident when he tells Matt that he can tell how much someone loves him by the size of



their gift. Matt is insulted and angered when Maria flings his gift away instead of handing it to him, so in an attempt to punish her for the offense, he demands she bring it to him and give him a birthday kiss. Senator Mendoza tries to save his daughter, but he is prevented from doing so when El Patron angrily takes Matt's side. Maria is embarrassed that she has to kiss Matt because he is a clone, and Matt regrets starting the whole affair; however, he knows that he can not prevent it once El Patron participates in the argument for fear that El Patron will punish Maria in a worse way. Everyone at the party seems disgusted with Matt for how he treated Maria, and Matt retires to his room, feeling guilty when he looks at the loving gift that Maria had brought him. During the dinner party, El Patron and Mr. MacGregor discuss fetal brain implants, foreshadowing the reason that clones are created in this novel.

In Chapter 12, Matt wants to make up with Maria, but he knows that it will take her a while to forgive him. He is shocked when Felicia visits him in Celia's apartment, claiming that she wants to help him reunite with Maria. Maria is still angry when Matt locates her in the hospital waiting room, and her anger, her claim that he invited her, and Tom's arrival indicate that Tom has orchestrated the whole scene as revenge against Matt for placing him at the baby table during the birthday party. Matt realizes Tom and Felicia must be working together and tries to prevent Tom's idea since he knows Tom must be up to something foul. This is quite obvious in the following scenes where they are confronted with MacGregor's clone which causes Maria to turn from Matt in disgust. She refuses to even let him touch her, despite his protestations that he is different. The chapter ends with Matt feeling distraught, Maria ignoring him, and Tom emerging triumphant. This foreshadows Matt's attempt to win Maria's affections back and the continuing contempt between Matt and Tom.



Section 6: Chapters 13 and 14

Section 6: Chapters 13 and 14 Summary

In Chapter 13: The Lotus Pond, Matt rushes to Celia and tells her everything that happened at the hospital because he is upset and needs to talk to someone. Celia explains that clones are injected with a drug that destroys their brains, and since Matt is the only clone without such an injection, he feels special and unique and is filled with gratitude for El Patron. Matt is confident that Maria will understand if he can get her alone and explain that he is different from other clones, but he must act quickly because she is returning to boarding school soon. Matt decides to kidnap Furball and leave a ransom note for Maria. Though he steals laudanum from Felicia's closet, he does not use it. That night, Matt sneaks to the lotus pond to meet Maria and return Furball, but when the security system goes off, Senator Mendoza chides Matt for killing Furball while Daft Donald and Tam Lin restrain Matt. No one believes Matt's protestations of innocence, not even Tam Lin who is ordered to leave with El Patron.

In Chapter 14: Celia's Story, Matt is depressed when everyone leaves since they are convinced he poisoned Furball, but he must admit the evidence against him is pretty good. Celia tells Matt that once something belongs to El Patron, he never lets it go. Thinking Matt might not get into so much trouble if people explained things to him, Celia tells Matt that she grew up in Atzlan, in the same poor village where El Patron was born. As a girl, she worked in a factory on the border where she learned to cook and acquired the freedom of going to the market for ingredients. She met a coyote, a man who smuggles people to the U. S. at the market, but he turned her into the Farm Patrol. While she was being questioned, El Patron entered and learned she could cook. "From that moment on, I belonged to El Patron. I'll always belong to him. He'll never let me go", Celia tells Matt (p. 143). Matt comforts Celia but wishes he could forget everything.

Section 6: Chapters 13 and 14 Analysis

In Chapter 13, Matt is upset after the fiasco at the hospital so he runs to talk to Celia, his confidante on whom he can always rely. Celia comforts him and tells him that Felicia once ran off with Mr. MacGregor, and though El Patron retrieved her, Tom is actually MacGregor's son. Matt wonders why MacGregor needs a clone when he already has a son though. Celia further tells him that most clones' brains are destroyed by having a drug injection, but Matt is different because he was not injected with the drug. This verifies that Matt is the clone that Eduardo bred in the first chapter. It also raises the question, again, of why El Patron does not want his clone's brain destroyed, especially when considering Eduardo being told that all Matteo Alacran clones do not receive the injection. Matt feels special because of this information and concocts a scheme to get Maria alone so that he can explain to her that he is different from the clone they saw at the hospital. He knows she will understand and not be disgusted by him if he explains. Matt plans to kidnap Furball, and he steals laudanum in case he needs to quiet the dog.



Luckily, Furball is compliant in being kidnapped. As expected, Maria is distraught to find that Furball is missing, but Matt is more distraught when he goes to meet Maria only to be confronted by Senator Mendoza, Tam Lin and Daft Donald who accuse him of killing Furball. Since Matt's fingerprints were found on a bottle of laudanum, no one believes his protestations of innocence. Matt is locked in Celia's apartment until Maria leaves, and he is rendered speechless because he is so upset, especially when he learns El Patron is also leaving and taking Tam Lin with him.

Matt is depressed as the next chapter begins because no one believes he did not kill Furball. He grieves that Tam Lin, the only one who has ever treated him as an equal is gone, but he finds a glimmer of hope in the fact that Tam Lin thought he could be something more than what others thought him to be; Matt promises himself he will live up to Tam Lin's expectations. Tom is banished to a year round boarding school because Maria told her father about seeing MacGregor's clone in the hospital. Celia tries to explain things to Matt, hoping it will help him stay out of trouble if he understands their world a little better. She tells him about her past and how she came to be a cook for the Alacrans. Her explanation that El Patron considers people to be among his possessions foreshadows the extent of his greed and feelings of entitlement to what he believes belongs to him. Matt tries to comfort Celia when she finishes her story because she seems hopeless, but he wishes he could forget everything and be happy again. When he asks what happened to the other people who crossed the border, Celia tells him they were all turned into eejits.



Section 7: Chapters 15, 16 & 17

Section 7: Chapters 15, 16 & 17 Summary

In Old Age: 12-14, Chapter 15: A Starved Bird, to escape his boredom one day, Matt rides to the oasis where he finds a large metal chest and a note from Tam Lin which says he was forced to leave with El Patron but has left supplies because Matt never knows when he might need them. Matt returns to chaos at the house because El Viejo is dead, and El Patron insists upon Matt and Celia's presence at the funeral. When the priest of the funeral service objects to Matt's presence because he is an animal, Maria defends him, claiming St. Francis took a wolf to church. Maria leads Matt through the hallways, kisses him to show she has forgiven him and says she ignored him after the hospital because she was shocked. When people in the hallway interrupt their conversation, Matt pulls Maria into the secret passage.

In Chapter 16: Brother Wolf, Matt leads Maria to an empty warehouse filled with computers where she explains she decided to forgive him after reading "The Little Flowers of Saint Francis" about St. Francis giving a terrorizing wolf a stern talking to make him be good. They hide in the passage when Tom and Felicia enter the storeroom to search the monitors for them. Looking at the storehouse on the monitor, Felicia confides to her son that she killed Furball because she was angry about how Matt treated Tom at the birthday party, causing Maria to slide to the floor in grief. As Matt leads Maria back through the passage, they run into Tam Lin, and Maria tells him about overhearing Felicia's confession. Maria apologizes for accusing Matt of something he did not do before Tam Lin leads her out of the passage.

In Chapter 17: The Eejit Pens, Matt is glad Maria and Tam Lin still like him, though the Mendozas and El Patron depart. He visits the oasis once a week, reading "A History of Opium", a book Tam Lin left him. He is upset to read a reference to El Patron as "a more evil, vicious, and self-serving man could hardly be imagined" (p. 170). Matt figures El Patron would not waste money educating him, so he must have a higher purpose, and he wants to free the eejits when he is helping the person in charge. He studies how to run an opium empire, and Matt visits the buildings where Opium's water is purified. When he nearly faints from the smell, a man who looks like a younger, colder Tam Lin rescues him and takes him back to the Big House after learning that Matt is El Patron's clone. When Matt asks about Tam Lin, he learns that Tam Lin killed twenty children with a bomb intended for the British Prime Minister.

Section 7: Chapters 15, 16 & 17 Analysis

Chapter 15 begins the next section, entitled Old Age, which covers Matt's life between the ages of 12 and 14. When Matt decides to take a trip to the oasis, he is surprised to find that Rosa has been turned into an eejit who works in the stables. Matt is happy to know Tam Lin did not desert him after all after finding the trunk filled with supplies at the



oasis. Matt finds chaos when he returns to the house because El Viejo has died, and though El Patron insists Matt attend the funeral, the priest insults Matt because he is a clone and claims he does not belong there. Citing St. Frances as an example, Maria defends Matt, showing that she still cares about him. In the hallway, she verbally forgives Matt and explains that she ignored him after the hospital because she was shocked. She knew what happened to clones but did not know how to tell Matt. Furthermore, she believes the practice of harvesting organs from clones is evil, unlike most people in Opium who seem to accept the practice as a part of life. Matt shows that he trusts Maria by showing her his secret passage. In Chapter 16, Maria tells Matt that St. Francis believed animals could be taught to be good, and since this is the reason she decided to forgive Matt, it is obvious that she considers him an animal. When Matt asks about hell, Maria says he cannot go to hell because he does not have a soul, but she likes being with him because no one at school is so easy to talk to. Maria and Matt overhear Felicia confess to Tom that she killed Furball, and this clears Matt of the murder to Maria who feels guilty for blaming him when he had not been at fault. They run into Tam Lin in the passage, and Tam Lin's knowledge of the passage is proof of how deeply he is in El Patron's confidence. Since everyone is looking for Maria and she will be in trouble for associating with Matt, Tam Lin will take Maria to El Patron's study, and El Patron will claim she has been there the entire time; Matt is to wait a few minutes before leaving the passage.

In the next chapter, Matt is relieved that Maria and Tam Lin still like him. He reads St. Francis but doubts even St. Francis would not consider him an abomination. Matt is upset to read that El Patron is an evil man in "A History of Opium", and though he now knows why clones are created, he comforts himself that El Patron would not waste resources educating him if he was going to be used for spare parts. Assuming he is being raised to assist Steven in running the opium empire after El Patron dies, Matt studies the business, learning about how the water in Opium comes from an underground river from the Gulf of California which has to be purified. As he is rescued from the buildings where the water is purified, Matt is horrified at the conditions in which the eejits are forced to live. He also learns about Tam Lin's past crimes, causing him to question Tam Lin's morality.



Section 8: Chapters 18, 19 & 20

Section 8: Chapters 18, 19 & 20 Summary

In Chapter 18: The Dragon Hoard, Celia wakes Matt and rushes him to get dressed. Bodyguards meet them in the hallway and escort them to the hospital to see El Patron who has had a heart attack. Matt feels sick from shock, but El Patron's surgery goes well, though it is obvious that something vital is now missing since he no longer finds pleasure in his enemies' disgraces. Trying to comfort El Patron, Matt suggests that St. Francis says it is good to give to the poor, causing El Patron to fly into a rage at the idea of giving stuff away. Tam Lin compliments Matt's cleverness in giving El Patron a boot up his rear by suggesting he give away his dragon hoard.

In Chapter 19: Coming-Of-Age, El Patron talks about his childhood and listens to Matt play the guitar and sing. One day, Matt's voice cracks, and El Patron says it has finally happened, instructing Matt to have Celia explain. Celia cries because it means Matt is grown up, and they must have a party to celebrate. The party that night with Celia and Tam Lin is subdued, but when Matt asks how old he is, Tam Lin explains how Matt was harvested from a cow. Tam Lin grows upset, claiming it is not right that they are only treated well until they outlive their usefulness. Celia comforts Tam Lin and sends Matt to bed. Matt sulks because they seem to have forgotten the party was for him, and he feels he has overlooked something important. As Matt thinks, he realizes clones are used for transplants, but he assures himself that he is different and was not created for spare parts since El Patron had not allowed his brain to be destroyed.

In Chapter 20: Esperanza, Matt visits the oasis and considers fleeing over the mountains, but he would not want to live without Celia, Tam Lin and Maria. As he reads "A History of Opium", Matt wonders what the author, Esperanza Mendoza, looks like, so he turns to her photograph to find that she looks like Maria. He reads that she is the ex-wife of Senator Mendoza and, realizing Maria cannot possibly know about this since she thinks her mother is dead, decides to show her when she visits again. When Matt gets sick from swimming at the oasis, Celia gives him milk, and Tam Lin, noticing that Matt smells like garlic, warns her against this because it might kill him. Celia insists they need a back-up plan because Tam Lin's plan may not work. After Matt recovers, he resumes spending time with El Patron who calls him Felipe, and Celia explains later that Felipe was El Patron's son who died eighty years ago. Matt wants to escape but cannot leave before Steven and Emilia's wedding since Maria will be there and he cannot leave without seeing her.

Section 8: Chapters 18, 19 & 20 Analysis

In Chapter 18, Matt is upset when El Patron suffers a heart attack, and it is obvious that El Patron is not completely himself after the surgery where his heart is jumped by fetal hearts, though the procedure goes well. When Matt suggests following St. Francis'



example of giving to the poor, El Patron flies into a rage. Tam Lin is amused that Matt creates life in the old man by suggesting he give away his dragon hoard, and when he explains what the dragon hoard is, Matt asks if the dragon hoard makes the dragon happy, and Tam Lin supposes it does, though he has never thought about it.

When Matt's voice cracks in Chapter 19, El Patron is gleeful, and Celia explains it means he is grown up. Though she throws a party to celebrate, Matt knows Celia is upset underneath but does not know why. After Tam Lin gets upset at the party, Celia sends Matt to bed, and Matt ruminates on what he missed, feeling it was very important. As he acknowledges why clones are created, he continues to insist to himself that he is different; however, his actions show that he is not sure of his status in El Patron's life. Matt hugs his pillow, thinking of the fate of the other clones and recalling the book that claimed El Patron is evil. Tam Lin appears in the doorway and tells Matt he is fourteen years old before returning to El Patron's wing of the house.

In the next chapter, Matt fears talking about his fears with Celia or Tam Lin, but he comforts himself that El Patron would not lavish attention and education on someone intended for use as spare parts. The conversation between Tam Lin and Celia about needing a back-up plan foreshadows later events, and it also indicates their love for Matt since it is obvious they are willing to risk El Patron's displeasure to save Matt. Matt still loves El Patron, though there is no question that the old man is evil. When El Patron calls Matt by the name Felipe, Celia tells Matt that Felipe is El Patron's son who died eighty years ago, and this means El Patron's brain is slipping and he needs another dose of fetal brain implants from a clone like Matt. Matt is upset at the idea of another clone like himself, one of his brothers, being used for such a cause, but though he wants to escape, he must see Maria before he attempts to leave Opium. This foreshadows a catastrophe that results from the delay. It also indicates that Matt no longer fully believes that he is special and El Patron will not use him for spare parts after all.



Section 9: Chapters 21 and 22

Section 9: Chapters 21 and 22 Summary

In Chapter 21: Blood Wedding, preparations are made for Steven and Emilia's wedding which had been decreed by El Patron. Matt hides behind a pillar to watch the guests arrive, noticing only Maria who slips through the crowd, and he follows Maria to the music room where she hugs him and tells him about school. Matt explains how he is different from other clones, but his mind numbs with despair at the idea of Maria marrying Tom when she tells him that El Patron has arranged for her to do so. Matt shows Maria "A History of Opium", and Maria is shocked by the evidence that her mother is still alive. Matt suggests Maria can contact her mother who can save her from marrying Tom. After Maria leaves him, Matt watches the wedding on monitors from the machine room from the secret passage. He sees El Patron jerk upward in his wheelchair, clutching his heart, and doctors huddle around El Patron as the wedding guests are ushered from the salon.

In Chapter 22: Betrayal, Matt does not know what to do since all the clues suggest his education was a sham and the strength of his heart is all that matters. Maria appears in the passage, saying Matt must stay in the passage, Tam Lin will spread a rumor that Matt is fleeing for the U. S., and Maria will return for Matt tonight so they can take her father's hovercraft away from Opium. When Maria returns, she tells Matt that El Patron is doing better but still needs a new heart if he is going to survive. She dresses Matt like an eejit and shines a red light on the wall to reveal a scorpion, explaining Tam Lin told her it will only work for El Patron, and though it might work for Matt because he shares El Patron's DNA, the passage will fill with lethal gas if not. He presses his hand against the scorpion, and they are both relieved when the door opens to reveal a tunnel which leads them to the edge of the hovercraft landing field. Matt pretends to be an eejit as they board Senator Mendoza's hovercraft, but Emilia arrives to say goodbye to her sister, and Steven reveals Matt. Steven orders the bodyguards to take "this clone to the hospital, where it can do some good" (p. 225) as Maria pleads for Emilia to help her save Matt. Since it is his last night, Matt wants to remember everything.

Section 9: Chapters 21 and 22 Analysis

As the wedding approaches, Matt grows more isolated as the day draws near, visiting the oasis only once to retrieve Esperanza's book. After Maria's arrival, Matt tries to explain that he is different from other clones because he is educated and can help Steven run the estate from behind the scenes since El Patron cannot stand Tom, Maria mentions Tom is considered good enough to marry her and hopes she can change him. This leads to Matt revealing to Maria that her mother is still alive and suggesting that Esperanza can help Maria avoid marrying Tom; although he knows he will never see her again, he will lose her either way, and the important thing is to save her from marrying Tom. After El Patron's heart attack, Steven and Emilia are left alone and forgotten at the



altar as Tam Lin carries El Patron from the room. When Maria finds Matt in the secret passage in the next chapter, she claims they are searching for Matt, but Tam Lin knew Matt was too clever not to figure it out. More importantly, Maria tells Matt that she knows he is much more than a dog, though Emilia claims he is just Maria's latest pet. This would be very important to Matt if the situation was not so dire. Matt does not want to risk Maria's life by attempting to escape through the tunnel by pressing the red scorpion, but she refuses to leave him again, saying she loves him though it is a sin and she will probably go to hell for it; Matt promises to go with her if he has a soul. This fulfills earlier foreshadowing and foreshadows that Matt and Maria will eventually be together. After being found on Senator Mendoza's hovercraft, Matt walks with the bodyguards because he does not want Maria's last image of him to be of an animal dragged to the slaughter. As Matt tries to remember everything since this is his last night, he wonders if he will ever see Celia, Tam Lin and Maria again, or if he will be denied entrance to Heaven.



Section 10: Chapters 23, 24 & 25

Section 10: Chapters 23, 24 & 25 Summary

In Age 14, Chapter 23: Death, Matt is terrified as he is strapped to a bed in the room where MacGregor's clone was kept. When he is taken to El Patron, El Patron smiles, complaining that clones always forget the wonderful years he gave them. El Patron retells the story of his youth, ending with his belief that he is meant to have justice for the fact that his siblings did not live to adulthood. Celia informs El Patron that he cannot use Matt for a transplant because she has fed him enough arsenic to kill anyone weak who tries to steal his heart; "you've had your eight lives, El Patron. It's time to make your peace with God" (p. 236). El Patron turns red and is taken to the emergency room as guards usher Celia away. Matt's solitude is interrupted when Mr. Alacran enters the room with Tam Lin, telling Matt that El Patron has died so Matt's services are no longer needed. Mr. Alacran orders Tam Lin to destroy the clone and be back for the wake tonight.

In Chapter 24: A Final Goodbye, Tam Lin binds Matt and carries him away on horseback. When the horse slows, Matt head butts Tam Lin in the stomach but is surprised to find himself on the path to the Ajo Mountains. Matt follows Tam Lin to the oasis where Tam Lin explains he had come to El Patron to escape prison and did not realize what a monster he had become until he met Celia. Matt is relieved to learn Tam Lin marked Celia to make it appear that she had become an eejit and put her in the stables with Rosa. Matt wholeheartedly apologizes for not trusting Tam Lin, and Tam Lin says Matt must now go to Atzlan. Tam Lin has already packed Matt's bag, and he instructs him to go to the border and claim his parents were taken by the Farm Patrol. Matt must go to the Convent of Santa Clara where Maria will be thrilled to see him, and Esperanza will hopefully help him. Matt is devastated when Tam Lin says they will never meet again, but Tam Lin insists "the important thing is, you've escaped. You're the one possession El Patron let slip through his fingers" (p. 246).

In Chapter 25: The Farm Patrol, Matt spends the night in the oasis. He follows Tam Lin's map to the cliffs, weeping for Celia, Tam Lin and El Patron as he takes his last look at Opium. Matt steps through a mountain pass into another world. He slides down a steep hill and, observing the border through binoculars, sees six men from the Farm Patrol. After the sun sets, a group of men burst from a junkyard and head toward the border, so Matt, seeing his opportunity as the Farm Patrol chases the men, runs for the border. One Farm Patroller chases Matt, but when he grabs Matt's backpack, Matt slips out of the straps and stumbles across the border into an oily black pool.

Section 10: Chapters 23, 24 & 25 Analysis

The next section of the novel, Age 14, is comprised of Chapters 23, 24 and 25. In Chapter 23, when Matt is taken to El Patron's hospital bed, he feels a wave of affection



for the old man, despite himself. He knows that El Patron plans to steal his heart in order to prolong his own life, but Matt is not capable of truly hating the man. As earlier in the tunnel with Maria, he is unable to wish harm on the old man. El Patron explains that he does not destroy his clones' brains because it gives him pleasure to provide them with the childhood he never had, thus contradicting all of Matt's hopes and justifications. Additionally, he shows a nearly sympathetic reason behind his cruelty when he rages about the universe owing the lives of his siblings to him since he was the only one of eight to reach adulthood. When he claims Matt owes him since he gave Matt life, Celia says Matt owes El Patron nothing. She further explains how she has made it impossible for El Patron to use Matt's heart, fulfilling the earlier foreshadowing regarding Celia and Tam Lin's plans. Matt is distraught when Tam Lin agrees to follow Mr. Alacran's order to destroy him, but Tam Lin claims he is a mercenary and Mr. Alacran has offered him a new job which he needs since his former employer is now dead. Matt cannot understand the betrayal because he thought Tam Lin was his friend.

As the next chapter begins, Tam Lin tells Daft Donald that he is going to dump the clone next to the eejit pens, heightening the betrayal; however, it soon becomes apparent that Tam Lin is not being honest with Mr. Alacran or Daft Donald. He takes Matt to the oasis where he answers Matt's accusation about killing twenty children, claiming that killing the children was an accident, but that does not erase the horror of it. Tam Lin shows his love for Matt and his loyalty by having packed a bag for Matt and directing Matt about how to escape Opium and flee to Atzlan. Tam Lin cannot accompany Matt to Atzlan because he has spent years benefiting from the horrors of opium and must put things right now. In Atzlan, Matt must tell no one he is a clone; the secret is no one can tell the difference between humans and clones because there is no difference.

Chapter 25 portrays Matt's journey away from Opium and the emotional turmoil he suffers. He is devastated to lose Tam Lin and Celia. He worries about Celia but plans to ask Esperanza to rescue her. Matt is overwhelmed at his first glance of Atzlan, but knowing he has no choice but to move forward, he does so cautiously. Although the Border Patrol nearly captures Matt, he manages to escape into Atzlan.



Section 11: Chapters 26 & 27

Section 11: Chapters 26 & 27 Summary

In *La Vida Nueva*, Chapter 26: *The Lost Boys*, the border patrol treats Matt like a guest, offering him a shower and food, and while he eats, Matt tells the story Tam Lin prepared about his family being taken by the Farm Patrol and asks to go to San Luis where he has a friend. The guards ask what kind of work he can do to contribute to the general good of the people, and after Matt mentions studying water purification, Raul suggests sending Matt to the plankton factory in San Luis. Matt spends the night in the guardhouse, and the next morning, Raul locks Matt into a large, grey building filled with boys doing various jobs. Chacho and Fidelito, a small boy, are also going to San Luis. Matt wanders around, watching the boys' various chores. Fidelito makes vitamin pills, and he informs Matt that everyone must have the same output, regardless of their size.

In Chapter 27: *A Five-Legged Horse*, Matt spends the rest of the day drifting between groups and storing information. Matt helps Fidelito make pills because he feels it is unfair for the boy to be deprived of food for being slower than the other boys. After lunch, Matt helps Fidelito for a while before switching to Chacho's table for variety. Before bedtime, Raul enters to give a talk entitled "Why Individualism Is Like A Five-Legged Horse" which emphasizes that things only go smoothly when people work together. Matt angers Raul by suggesting that it would make more sense to put a computer chip in the horse's brain than to saw off its fifth leg, and after Raul leaves, the boys crowd around Matt, impressed that he told Raul that the Keepers are trying to turn the Lost Boys into brainless robots. Matt stays awake late, realizing he must be careful since these people are easily offended by mere words, and he also worries about hiding his tattoo that ties him to El Patron. Matt feels like he has spent his entire life walking across a huge desert and has finally arrived at the best oasis in the world.

Section 11: Chapters 26 & 27 Analysis

Chapter 26 begins a new section, *La Vida Nueva*, which is also the final section in *The House of the Scorpion*. Though Matt is treated kindly by the Atzlan Border Patrol at first, they take him to a grey building where boys are working the next morning, foreshadowing his future in Atzlan. One boy, Chacho, advises Matt to rest while he can since the Keepers will put him to work tomorrow. This also foreshadows that Matt will endure hardships in Atzlan. Matt befriends Chacho and Fidelito on his first day since they are also being sent to the plankton factory outside of San Luis. When Fidelito asks about Matt's parents, Matt asks if others have lost their parents and learns this is an orphanage; the border guards house the children to become part of the production of resources for the good of the people.

In Chapter 27, Matt stores as much information as he can from listening to the other boys talk. The Keepers are in charge of people who cannot take care of themselves,



and the orphans are known as Lost Boys and Lost Girls. Everyone seems to hate the Keepers, though only Chacho says so directly. No one knows what lies beyond the borders of Opium which they call Dreamland. Before receiving their lunches, the boys must recite the Five Principles of Good Citizenship and the Four Attitudes Leading to Right-Mindfulness, and this is reminiscent of extremist military factions or cults. Chacho advises Matt to enjoy the variety while he can because the Keepers will only allow him to do one task once he is settled since it is supposed to be more efficient; this may also remind the reader of an extremist militant society. Matt gets into trouble with the Keepers on the first night for voicing his opinion, and it is obvious that the Lost Boys are not supposed to actually think at all. Though sorrow threatens to overwhelm him at the thought of Celia and Tam Lin, he is immensely cheered at the idea of finding Maria in San Luis, and he basks in the approval of his new friends who accept him as if he were a real human. Matt begins to enjoy his new life since he has friends who treat him like a normal person for the first time.



Section 12: Chapters 28, 29 & 30

Section 12: Chapters 28, 29 & 30 Summary

In Chapter 28: The Plankton Factory, Matt is assigned to making pills with the younger boys in the morning, and though he is given only a half-portion of breakfast, the older boys share with him so that he receives a full portion. Around midmorning, Raul summons Matt, Chacho and Fidelito to go to San Luis, giving them plastic strips to weave into sandals on the hovercraft. Fidelito vomits on the hovercraft, but the smell is even worse when they land. Carlos, the head Keeper, gives them a tour of the factory and explains the process of harvesting plankton. After lunch, Matt, Chacho and Fidelito are put to work tending the brine shrimp tanks. Fidelito tells Matt and Chacho about living on the seashore of the Yucatan with his grandmother until a hurricane destroyed their home, and Matt is saved from answering questions about his past by Carlos' arrival. Matt and Chacho dispute his claim that he has earned privileges through hard work, and Carlos punishes them by revoking food for all three boys.

In Chapter 29: Washing A Dusty Mind, Matt wonders why the Keepers call him an aristocrat, and Chacho explains that he is always thinking. At bedtime, Jorge tells an inspirational story, "Why Minds Gather Dust Like Old Rooms," and Matt does not point out the inconsistencies and falsehoods in the tale because he does not want to miss another meal; however, Jorge asks Matt how to keep a mind clean, but when Matt suggests that, like keeping the rust off a door hinge, using their brains all the time will prevent their minds from collecting germs, Jorge chides him for his wrong answers and claims "diseased opinions not suited to the good of the people have to be cleaned out with self-criticism" (p. 291). The other boys make odd confessions and receive odd punishments, but when Jorge asks again what Matt has done wrong, Matt insists he has done nothing wrong, so at Jorge's insistence that they must help Matt see the error of his ways, the other boys hurl accusations at Matt about how different he is. Matt curls into a ball in the middle of the floor, saddened that he has not truly been accepted as he thought, but recalling those he loves from a place deep inside, Matt rises.

In Chapter 30: When The Whales Lost Their Legs, Matt searches for weak areas in the fence as the boys grow accustomed to their new environment, and when Chacho notices something white in the distance, he and Matt find whale bones. Each night after their story, the boys confess their sins and hurl insults at Matt, but the attacks hurt less and less as time goes on. Jorge claims Matt needs further education, and accusing Ton-Ton of stealing a holo-game from the Keepers' room, he beats Ton-Ton with a cane; Matt realizes that Jorge is just using Ton-Ton as an easy target to frighten him. After Ton-Ton is taken to the infirmary, Jorge asks if Matt has any shortcomings to share, and everyone is shocked when Matt says no. Fidelito tries to confess for Matt, and Jorge says Matt has turned Fidelito into a lackey and the lackey will be punished. Matt confesses and assumes the position to prevent Jorge from beating Fidelito. After his beating, the boys praise Matt for his bravery and take him to the infirmary where he receives a dose of laudanum.



Section 12: Chapters 28, 29 & 30 Analysis

On his second day in Atzlan, Matt is sent to the plankton factory with Chacho and Fidelito. Their friendship continues to develop as they discuss their mutual heartaches, though Matt always evades or indirectly answers questions as much as possible. At the plankton factory in Chapter 28, it is obvious that the boys are not going to be treated well as soon as they arrive and begin being yelled at. At lunch, all of the boys are fed plankton, and when Carlos explains that the water to the west is the Gulf of California which is so polluted that all of the whales that lived there died, Matt realizes this is where Opium's water comes from. When Matt questions Carlos' right to ride a vehicle while the boys are forced to walk, Carlos claims he earned the privilege. Because Matt and Chacho dispute this right, Carlos punishes Matt, Chacho and Fidelito by refusing to allow them to eat dinner that night. Matt and Chacho feel bad that Fidelito is being punished with them since he did nothing wrong; however, they laugh hysterically when Fidelito rebelliously asserts that he is proud to be with them, despite losing his food.

In Chapter 29, the Keepers mock Matt for being an aristocrat, and Chacho explains this is because of the way Matt talks and how he always seems to be thinking. Yet again, Matt is alienated by his differences, but in Atzlan, his differences are his education and superior upbringing as opposed to the supposed inferiority of being a clone. Jorge chides Matt for incorrectly answering a question pertaining to the boys' bedtime story, though Matt's answer seems completely logical and correct based on the story told. As a result of being wrong, Matt must clean his diseased opinions with self-criticism. Volunteering to demonstrate this concept for Matt, Ton-Ton admits that he thought about stealing food this morning, and he is punished by having to recite the Five Principles and Four Attitudes twice before receiving food the next time. When the other boys criticize Matt since he still refuses to admit his crimes, Matt is overwhelmed with sadness and curls onto the floor, realizing that he is not really accepted as he thought. His only will to get up again comes from thoughts of Celia, Tam Lin and Maria. When Matt gathers himself from the floor, he sees Chacho and Fidelito making rude gestures about Jorge. Nearly crying, Matt realizes he is not alone after all, and he cannot help but triumph with friends like these.

When Matt continues to refuse to confess in Chapter 30, Jorge demonstrates what happens to such stubborn boys by beating Ton-Ton. Again, Matt refuses to confess or assume the position, and when Jorge claims some boys need to be broken and mended until they learn to do as they are told, Matt infuriates the Keeper by saying "in other words, you want to turn me into a zombie" (p. 302). Jorge beats Matt severely, but the other boys admire Matt for angering the Keeper so much. Matt is taken to the infirmary where, as he falls into a drug-induced haze, he wonders if he will meet Furball in whatever afterlife non-humans inhabit, indicating that he still does not consider himself to be human.



Section 13: Chapters 31, 32 & 33

Section 13: Chapters 31, 32 & 33 Summary

In Chapter 31: Ton-Ton, Ton-Ton is very knowledgeable about what goes on inside the Keepers' compound because he is allowed to clean their rooms since they believe he is too slow-witted to understand what he sees, but Matt realizes Ton-Ton is very intelligent and simply careful about sharing his opinions. Ton-Ton tells Matt and Luna about the luxuries the Keepers enjoy, and when he mentions that the Keepers take laudanum every night, Matt realizes that the compound is left unguarded while the Keepers turn into zombies. Jorge forces Matt and Ton-Ton to return to work the next day, but Matt is eager to plot his escape, intending to take Chacho and Fidelito with him. At Matt's insistence, he, Chacho and Fidelito wait for Ton-Ton because he knows things they need to find out. Ton-Ton is suspicious at first, but he tells them about San Luis and how Jorge says he was born to be a Keeper, promising not to tell why they are late. When Chacho expresses surprise that Ton-Ton is so bright, Matt informs him that "Celia used to say slow people are just paying close attention" (p. 315). Chacho asks who Celia is, and Matt says she is his mother and knows it is true since no one else cared about him as much, except maybe Tam Lin who is like his father. As the memories flood back, Matt gives in to the grief and cries, and Chacho shields him from view until he is able to regain control.

In Chapter 32: Found Out, Jorge pounces on Matt again, threatening to punish his lackey when Matt cannot pay attention because his thoughts are focused on Celia. Jorge insists on removing Matt's lackey to prevent Matt from being an aristocrat, and the boys are shocked that Jorge is crossing the line since Fidelito is small, weak and has done nothing wrong. As Jorge prepares to beat Fidelito, Matt and Chacho attack Jorge while Flaco drags Fidelito away. Just after Matt and Chacho stop beating Jorge, twenty Keepers with stun guns enter and seize Matt and Chacho, but Flaco claims they all witnessed that Jorge was going to kill Fidelito, causing the Keepers to realize they cannot control such a large crowd, despite how well-armed they are. Jorge interjects that the boys have been corrupted by Matt, telling them about the tattoo Luna saw on Matt's foot in the infirmary, and after seeing the tattoo, the boys surrender. Ton-Ton argues that their parents were all trapped in Dreamland and it makes them unlucky, not bad people. Jorge tells Ton-Ton to be quiet because he is stupid, and the Keepers take Matt and Chacho to a small, dark closet.

In Chapter 33: The Boneyard, the Keepers fetch Matt and Chacho in the morning and throw them, still bound, into the basin filled with whale bones. After the Keepers leave, Matt and Chacho consider how to escape, but when they move to cut the tape against the bones, they sink deeper into the pit. Matt says they must be very careful, recalling that humans are different from animals because they understand hope. After freeing their wrists, they work on their ankles. By nightfall, Matt's legs are free, allowing him to inch toward the edge and pull himself from the pit, talking so Chacho can find him. He



hears Chacho snoring and realizes that, though he is still stuck in the pit, at least he is alive.

Section 13: Chapters 31, 32 & 33 Analysis

At the infirmary in Chapter 31, Ton-Ton and Luna discuss how Luna is training to become a Keeper as Carlos claims every boy can do when he reaches eighteen years old, but this does not make sense to Matt who points out that there are many more Lost Boys than Keepers. Ton-Ton is very knowledgeable about the Keepers and the plankton factory, so Matt listens closely, realizing that Ton-Ton is not stupid as everyone thinks he is; he is just very careful about sharing his opinions. Matt is shocked to see that his face is covered with pimples, and Luna says it is the mark of people who work with plankton. When Matt learns that the Keepers are incoherent every night because they take laudanum, he begins to plan his escape. He considers killing the Keepers, but Maria's voice acts as a conscience, telling him murder is wrong. Since Ton-Ton has been to San Luis, Matt, Chacho and Fidelito befriend Ton-Ton in order to obtain more information from the older boy, foreshadowing how useful Ton-Ton can be as a friend. His reaction when they approach him makes it obvious that he has never really had a friend before.

In Chapter 32, Jorge insinuates that he will kill Fidelito in order to punish Matt since Matt is not learning to be obedient as he wants. Matt and Chacho stand up to Jorge, beating him, to defend Fidelito, and when the other Keepers enter the room and confine Matt and Chacho, the other boys rebel against the Keepers until Jorge reports that Luna saw a tattoo on Matt's foot when he was in the infirmary which means Matt is a zombie. Matt is devastated when the other boys surrender. Matt and Chacho are bound and gagged, and when they are locked in a small closet, Matt is glad their mouths are taped shut so he will not have to hear Chacho insult him.

In Chapter 33, Jorge throws Matt and Chacho into the boneyard, obviously intending for them to die there, but as Matt says, humans have hope. The boys struggle to free their hands and feet. Matt escapes from the boneyard, but Chacho does not respond to his calls. Matt is relieved to hear Chacho snoring, but he worries about how to help his friend as the chapter ends.



Section 14: Chapters 34 & 35

Section 14: Chapters 34 & 35 Summary

In Chapter 34: The Shrimp Harvester, Matt tries to get a response from Chacho in vain as the new day dawns, and he sees a patch of Chacho's uniform near the edge of the pit. Matt is amazed to see Ton-Ton and Fidelito approach on Ton-Ton's shrimp harvester. Ton-Ton uses the harvester to retrieve Chacho, and he gives Chacho soda because he is dehydrated. They need to leave to go to San Luis. While Ton-Ton tears a hole in the fence with his machine, Fidelito informs Matt that they gave the Keepers opium and blocked the exits from their compound, locking the Keepers inside while they slept. They drive until night falls when the shrimp harvester shuts down since it runs on solar energy. Worried that Chacho will not make it through the night, Matt and Fidelito continue toward San Luis on foot.

In Chapter 35: El Dia De Los Muertos, Matt tells Fidelito about Maria and the Convent of Santa Maria as they walk. The smell of the Colorado River causes Matt to have an asthma attack, and Fidelito continues alone. Soon, hands lift Matt and hold an inhaler to his face. An old woman, Consuela, assures Matt that an ambulance is already on the way to Chacho. Consuela and her brother, Guapo, take Matt to a cemetery where Fidelito awaits. Guapo offers to take the boys to see Chacho in the hospital at the Convent of Santa Clara.

Section 14: Chapters 34 & 35 Analysis

In Chapter 34, Matt is frightened when he hears a machine approaching, but he refuses to leave Chacho who is still not responding. Luckily, the noise announces the arrival of the shrimp harvester, carrying Fidelito and Ton-Ton. Fulfilling the earlier foreshadowing regarding how valuable Ton-Ton could be as a friend, Ton-Ton rescues Chacho and drives the shrimp harvester out of the factory confines to escape with Matt, Chacho and Fidelito. He also gives the Keepers an excessive dose of laudanum to prevent them from waking too soon. The rest of the boys show their loyalty by blockading the Keepers' compound to ensure the escape of the four friends. Unfortunately, Chacho is in immense pain, and Matt promises to find a doctor as soon as they reach San Luis. When the shrimp harvester can go no further due to running on solar power, Matt and Fidelito continue on foot because they are worried that Chacho will not survive through the night without a doctor's attention.

In Chapter 35, Matt tells Fidelito about Maria, showing that he obviously cares deeply about Maria and that he trusts Fidelito. Matt suffers from an asthma attack due to the pollution in the Colorado River, ironically the source of Opium's water which caused Matt to nearly pass out when he was studying how to run an opium empire. He is rescued by Consuela and her brother, Guapo, who take him to the cemetery where Fidelito awaits with a group who celebrate La Dia De Los Muertos, or the Day of the



Dead. As soon as Matt can breathe again, he shows his concern for Chacho by trying to send Consuela to help his friend; fortunately, Fidelito has already informed her of Chacho's condition, and an ambulance is on the way. Guapo offers to take Matt and Fidelito to visit Chacho at the hospital which, as luck would have it, is at the Convent of Santa Maria. On the way to the Convent of Santa Clara, Matt and Fidelito don masks to avoid the Keepers' attention.



Section 15: Chapters 36, 37 & 38

Section 15: Chapters 36, 37 & 38 Summary

In Chapter 36: The Castle On The Hill, Guapo takes Matt and Fidelito to the bottom of a hill in his hovercar, and they climb up the hill and enter a hallway where they ask a nurse to see Chacho. The nurse warns them to be careful because the Keepers are nosing about because of a mutiny at the factory. She leads them to Chacho by a private way, and they find the room in chaos as Ton-Ton lies crumpled on the floor while two Keepers try to take Chacho, and two nuns refuse to allow them to do so. When Matt reveals his presence, a fight ensues between the Keepers and the boys and nuns, but it breaks up when Dona Esperanza enters the room and demands to know the reason for the fight. She asks Ton-Ton to explain, and though Jorge and Carlos try to deny his story, Esperanza informs them that the police found laudanum at the factory, summoning an officer who leads Carlos and Jorge away. A shriek resounds as Maria enters the room, hugs Matt and rejoices that he is still alive.

In Chapter 37: Homecoming, Matt is ordered to bed because of the sores on his body, and the best part of Matt's day is when Maria visits. One day, Esperanza joins Maria and informs Matt he has a very important job to do: no one has heard a word from Opium since El Patron died. The country is on lockdown, but El Patron's signature overrides everything, and since Matt shares his DNA, he may be able to enter Opium. When Matt objects that he is a clone and will be killed immediately, Esperanza informs him that since El Patron is dead, he is the only, and thus real, Matteo Alacran, and therefore the new master of Opium. With the backing of the Atzlan and U.S. governments, she promises to make Matt the new lord of Opium if he survives, and she only wants him to destroy the opium empire and tear down the barrier between Atzlan and the U.S. In the hovercraft above Opium, Matt slams his hand on the identity plate when the signal lights up, and they are welcomed to Opium. As Matt nervously enters the salon, he finds Mr. Ortega playing the piano, but the music teacher flees when he sees Matt. Matt sits and plays until he feels a hand on his shoulder. Celia is thrilled to see Matt, and she explains they could not send a message because they have been in lockdown for months. As she leads Matt to the kitchen, he is struck by the silence, and when they find Mr. Ortega and Daft Donald sitting at the table, Celia reminds Matt of what she told him regarding El Patron never letting things go and how they all belonged to him, especially Matt.

In Chapter 38: The House of Eternity, Celia, Daft Donald and Mr. Ortega recount the evening of El Patron's death. The funeral took place in the mausoleum, and at the wake, everyone rejoiced that El Patron was dead. Tam Lin brought out a special bottle of wine that was bottled the year El Patron was born that he had been saving for his one hundred, fiftieth birthday or his funeral if he died first, but he warned Daft Donald against drinking the wine because he had a funny feeling about it. Everyone drank and fell to the ground, dead, except Daft Donald who sealed the entrance by setting off explosives. El Patron wanted to be buried with his dragon hoard, and that included people. Matt is



furious that Tam Lin knew about the wine and still drank it, so he obtains a Safe Horse and rides across the poppy fields. In the oasis, Matt folds Tam Lin's note and puts it in his pocket. The sun causes a red scorpion to appear on the rock, and when Matt presses his hand to it, it opens to reveal the first chamber of El Patron's dragon hoard. Reading Tam Lin's note, Matt thinks that Tam Lin could have refused to go with El Patron. Late that night, Matt sits by the fire, contemplating how to begin the task of breaking down the empire of Opium tomorrow. It is a terrifying job, but he is not alone, and it will get done with everyone's help. From the darkness on the other side of the fire, Tam Lin assures Matt that he can do it, and Matt knows he can.

Section 15: Chapters 36, 37 & 38 Analysis

In Chapter 36, a nun leads Matt and Fidelito to Chacho's room, warning them that the Keepers are lurking about due to the mutiny at the plankton factory. When they enter the room, the Keepers are trying to take Chacho, but the nuns and the boys fight them off until Esperanza Mendoza enters the room. Everyone is obviously frightened of Maria's mother as they all freeze when she demands to know what is going on. Rather than asking the Keepers, Esperanza asks Ton-Ton to tell her what has caused such a commotion. At first, Matt worries that she does believe Ton-Ton, but she mocks the Keepers as they declare their innocence and has them arrested. Esperanza has suspected the Keepers of smuggling laudanum for years but could not get a search warrant until Ton-Ton's account. At the end of the chapter, Maria enters the room, joyful after finding that Matt is still alive. This fulfills the earlier foreshadowing that they would eventually be reunited.

In Chapter 37, since Matt is put to bed due to the sores on his body, Ton-Ton and Fidelito visit him every day, showing their loyalty. Maria's visits enable Matt to see the world as infinitely hopeful through her eyes. Esperanza visits Matt with Maria one day and proposes that he return to Opium. Because he shares El Patron's DNA, he should be able to override the lockdown system and enter the country. She also tells Matt that he is really a human since the original Matteo Alacran is dead; he is the only living Matteo Alacran, and thus, he is the real Matteo Alacran and the master of Opium. She promises to establish Matt as ruler if he will end the opium empire and tear down the border between Opium and Atzlan. Trying to understand the sudden shift in his fortunes, Matt knows he cannot refuse because of the terrible suffering El Patron had caused; "if Matt had become El Patron, then he'd gotten the whole package: wealth, power... and the evil that created it" (p. 368). Matt is frightened as he lands in Opium and walks toward the Big House on the Alacran Estate, but he continues onward because he must uphold his end of the bargain with Esperanza. He is comforted when he sees Celia who leads him to the kitchen and begins her explanation of what has happened since she last saw Matt in Chapter 38.

In the final chapter, Celia tells Matt what happened on the night of El Patron's death. After the funeral, the wake began, during which Tam Lin distributed poisoned wine as ordered by El Patron, and everyone died except Daft Donald whom Tam Lin warned against drinking the wine. El Patron wanted to be buried with all of his possessions,



including people. Tam Lin knew about the wine, but he saw it as his chance to free the eejits and free Opium from another hundred years of being ruled by the Alacran family. He could not forgive himself for his youthful crimes and saw this as a way to make up for everything. Cursing Tam Lin as an idiot, Matt obtains a Safe Horse and rides through the fields, wondering what to do about the eejits and being angry at Tam Lin for ruining his dream of happiness with Celia, Tam Lin and Maria. As he rides across the poppy fields, Matt wonders if the eejit operation can be reversed and decides to talk to Daft Donald about hiring a new army of bodyguards from another country, remembering El Patron's advice that it is harder for foreigners to betray him. He plans to help the eejits reunite with their children after he cures them, and he will plant normal crops in the poppy fields. He can invite Chacho, Fidelito and Ton-Ton to live with him, as well as Maria.



Characters

Matteo Alacran

Matteo Alacran, a.k.a. Matt, is the protagonist of *The House of the Scorpion*. He is a clone who was created from the DNA of El Patron, the Master of Opium, and this novel recounts his life. Matt lives isolated in a house in the middle of the poppy fields with Celia. When children appear outside the window and try to talk to him, Matt breaks the window and jumps out, cutting himself on the glass. The children carry him to the Big House on the Alacran Estate to see the doctor, but when Mr. Alacran recognizes Matt as El Patron's clone, he puts Rosa in charge of Matt. Rosa imprisons Matt in a room filled with sawdust, treating him like an animal, but when Celia finds out what is going on, she contacts El Patron who rescues Matt and forbids anyone to treat Matt poorly. Matt is educated and raised in the Big House, but the Alacrans and their servants ignore him as much as possible. Maria Mendoza is Matt's only friend near his age. Tam Lin, his bodyguard, teaches him a bit about life outside of the poppy fields. El Patron loves Matt because Matt is El Patron. When Matt learns that clones are created to harvest body organs, he is distraught, but he convinces himself that El Patron would not waste resources educating him if he is supposed to be used for spare parts.

During Steven and Emilia's wedding, El Patron has a heart attack, and though Maria tries to save him, Matt is captured and taken to the hospital so that he can be used for El Patron's heart transplant. Since Celia has poisoned Matt with arsenic, El Patron cannot use his heart, and he dies. Mr. Alacran orders Tam Lin to destroy Matt, but instead, Tam Lin sends Matt to Atzlan to find Maria. When Matt escapes Opium, the Keepers take responsibility for him, sending him to work in the plankton factory near San Luis where he is mocked as an aristocrat. After escaping his intended death in the boneyard, Matt escapes from the plankton factory with three friends and finally reaches the convent of Santa Clara where Maria resides. Esperanza, Maria's mother, sends Matt to Opium to investigate the lockdown that has been in effect since El Patron's death because only Matt can override the system since he shares El Patron's DNA. At the Big House, Matt is reunited with Celia who tells him how everyone at El Patron's wake, including Tam Lin, was killed by poisoned wine because El Patron wanted to be buried with all of his possessions, including people. Since the original Matteo Alacran, El Patron, died, Matt is now the Master of Opium, and he prepares to take responsibility and correct the evils that his predecessor committed.

El Patron

El Patron is the ruler of Opium. The original Matteo Alacran, he is a powerful drug lord. When Matt meets him, El Patron is over a hundred and forty years old. He came from a poor, small town called Durango in Mexico, and he was one of eight children. Unfortunately, all of his siblings died before reaching adulthood, and the only survivor, El Patron was poor but filled with a burning desire to survive. When Matt is imprisoned in



the Big House, Celia summons El Patron who angrily rescues Matt and insists no one be unkind to his clone. Though he is generally cruel, he seems to love Matt, and Matt loves El Patron in return. El Patron measures how much someone loves him by the size and expense of the gifts they give him. He collects everything that is his in an underground vault which Tam Lin refers to as his dragon hoard. Once something belongs to El Patron, it is his forever, and his belongings also include people.

At Steven and Emilia's wedding, he suffers a heart attack, and Matt is brought to him for a heart transplant which he needs to survive. Matt is the eighth clone that El Patron has raised and educated in luxury because he feels the universe owes him justice for the deaths of his siblings; he believes he is meant to have the seven lives that were lost so young, as well as his own. Unfortunately for El Patron, Celia has poisoned Matt with just enough arsenic to prevent his heart from being useful for a transplant for someone as weak as El Patron, and without the young, transplanted heart, El Patron dies. At his orders, Tam Lin distributes poisoned wine from the year that El Patron was born during the wake, and everyone who drinks it dies. El Patron thus gets his wish to be buried with his entire dragon hoard, including the people that he thinks belong to him.

Celia

Celia is the head cook for the Alacrans at the Big House, and she also raises Matt, El Patron's clone. She is the closest thing Matt has to a mother, and she loves him very much. She raises Matt in a small house in the middle of the poppy fields until Rosa imprisons him in the Big House when he is six years old. When she learns of Matt's imprisonment, she contacts El Patron to rescue him, after which she and Matt live in an apartment in the Big House. Out of love for Matt, Celia stands up to El Patron, poisoning Matt with enough arsenic to prevent someone weak from stealing his heart without harming Matt. Though she is supposed to be turned into an eejit as punishment, Tam Lin marks her head so it appears she is an eejit and places her in the stables with Rosa. Celia is one of the few people who survive El Patron's poisonous wine at his wake.

Tam Lin

Tam Lin is El Patron's bodyguard and the person he trusts the most in the world. Tam Lin acts as Matt's bodyguard after El Patron rescues Matt from Rosa's cruelty. He befriends Matt and shows him the oasis where he teaches him about nature, essentially preparing him to escape to Atzlan. Tam Lin is the closest thing Matt has to a father. When he was young, Tam Lin accidentally killed twenty children with a bomb intended for the British Prime Minister, and he never forgives himself. He tries to save Matt from being used as a heart transplant for El Patron by sending him away with Maria, but when that fails and El Patron dies, Tam Lin promises Mr. Alacran that he will kill Matt; however, he sends Matt to Atzlan instead. At El Patron's wake, Tam Lin distributes the poisonous wine to prevent the Alacrans from continuing to terrorize Opium. He also partakes of the wine as penance for killing the twenty children when he was younger, and Matt is devastated when he learns that Tam Lin is dead.



Maria Mendoza

Maria Mendoza is the younger daughter of Senator Mendoza, and she befriends Matt since they are around the same age, though her family does not approve of her friendship with a clone. She attends school at the Convent of Santa Clara and believes in the teachings of Saint Francis. Because she loves Matt, she tries to save him from being killed to use his heart in a transplant for El Patron, but the plan fails when Emilia and Steven come to see her off. Maria is overjoyed to learn that Matt is alive when he arrives at the Convent of Santa Clara.

El Viejo

El Viejo is El Patron's grandson. He is very old and dies when he refuses to receive fetal implants because he thinks they are evil.

Mr. Alacran

Mr. Alacran is El Patron's great-grandson who is very cruel to Matt. He is the father of Benito and Steven, but he hates his wife because she ran away with Mr. MacGregor and was pregnant with Tom when El Patron retrieved her. After El Patron dies, Mr. Alacran orders Tam Lin to kill Matt. He dies from drinking the poisonous wine at El Patron's wake.

Felicia Alacran

Felicia is Mr. Alacran's cruel wife. Though she used to be a concert pianist, she suffered a nervous breakdown and is addicted to laudanum. At one time, she ran away with Mr. MacGregor, and when El Patron retrieved her, she was pregnant with Tom. Angry at how Matt treats Tom at his birthday party, Felicia kills Furball and blames it on Matt. She dies from drinking the poisonous wine at El Patron's wake.

Benito Alacran

Benito is the stupid, eldest son of Mr. Alacran and Felicia. He marries Fanny, a woman who hates him, when El Patron orders him to do so out of a desire for an alliance with her family. Benito and his wife die at El Patron's wake when they drink the poisonous wine that is distributed.

Steven Alacran

Steven is the second son of Mr. Alacran and Felicia. He is the first Alacran to find Matt, and he does not treat Matt as cruelly as the rest of his family does. During Steven's wedding to Emilia Mendoza, El Patron dies, and Steven and Emilia visit Maria on the



hovercraft before she leaves, catching Matt before he can escape. Steven dies from drinking the wine at El Patron's wake.

Tom Alacran

Tom is the son of Felicia and Mr. MacGregor. He is very cruel to Matt, tormenting him continually. He also torments Maria, but she insists upon being friends with Tom since El Patron has ordered their marriage. Tom dies from drinking the poisoned wine at El Patron's wake.

Rosa

Rosa is the Alacran's housekeeper who serves as Matt's jailer when he is six years old. When El Patron saves Matt, Rosa is turned into an eejit who tends the stables.

Eejits

Eejits, also known as zombies, are people with computer chips in their brains. They can only do menial tasks, such as tending the poppy fields. Anyone who severely displeases El Patron or who is caught on Opium's side of the border is turned into an eejit, and this is the reason that many children in Atzlan are orphans.

Keepers

The Keepers are the men who tend the Lost Boys, the orphans in Atzlan, and they are very cruel to the boys. They teach those under their care to abide by the Five Principles of Good Citizenship and the Four Attitudes Leading to Right-Mindfulness. Matt has direct interaction with mainly three Keepers: Raul, Carlos and Jorge.

Chacho

Chacho is an older, rebellious Lost Boy who befriends Matt. He is thrown into the boneyard with Matt after the two beat Jorge to prevent him from killing Fidelito, and Ton-Ton rescues him. Chacho escapes from the plankton factory with Matt, Fidelito and Ton-Ton.

Fidelito

Fidelito is a younger Lost Boy who befriends Matt, and Jorge calls him Matt's lackey. When Jorge tries to punish Matt by beating Fidelito, likely to death, Matt and Chacho beat Jorge and are thrown into the boneyard. Fidelito assists Ton-Ton in rescuing Matt and Chacho, and he escapes from the plankton factory with the other three boys.



Ton-Ton

Ton-Ton is an older Lost Boy at the plankton factory, and he operates the shrimp harvester. Everyone thinks he is slow, but Matt realizes Ton-Ton is just very careful about sharing his opinions. Matt, Chacho and Fidelito befriend Ton-Ton who, in turn, rescues Matt and Chacho from the boneyard and leads the escape from the plankton factory.

Daft Donald

Daft Donald is one of El Patron's Scottish bodyguards. He is the only survivor of El Patron's wake because Tam Lin warned him not to drink the wine.

Esperanza Mendoza

Esperanza Mendoza is Senator Mendoza's wife and the mother of Emilia and Maria. She disappeared when Maria was five, and Senator Mendoza and Emilia told Maria that Esperanza was dead. She actually left her family to fight against the evil of El Patron's opium empire and wrote "A History of Opium" which Matt reads and, realizing the author is Maria's mother, tells Maria the truth. At the Convent of Santa Clara, Esperanza defends the Lost Boys against the Keepers, and she sends Matt to Opium to investigate and end the lockdown. She promises to install Matt as the ruler of Opium with the backing of the U. S. and Atzlan governments if he will end the opium empire and open the border with Atzlan.



Objects/Places

Opium

Opium is the main setting of *The House of the Scorpion*. It is the land between what used to be Mexico and the U. S., but it is now bordered by the U. S. and Aztlan. The country is run by El Patron who controls the opium empire, planting his fields with poppy and using eejits to harvest the narcotic. When Matt finally reaches the Convent of Santa Clara after El Patron's death, Esperanza promises to establish Matt as the new Master of Opium if he promises to end the opium empire and open the border to Aztlan.

Celia's House

Matt spends the first six years of his life living isolated from everyone at Celia's house in the middle of the poppy fields.

Poppy Fields

The poppy fields surround Celia's house and the Big House. They produce Opium's only crop, opium, which is harvested by eejits.

Big House

The Alacrans live in the Big House on the Alacran Estate in Opium. Matt is imprisoned here by Rosa, and after El Patron frees him from his imprisonment, he resides with Celia in her apartment in the Big House. Matt is treated poorly by the Alacrans and their servants.

Aztlan

Aztlan is a nation bordering Opium where Matt flees to avoid being destroyed after El Patron's death, but Matt suffers many hardships in Aztlan at the hands of the Keepers.

Convent of Santa Clara

Maria attends school at the Convent of Santa Clara in San Luis, and this is Matt's intended destination when he escapes from Opium. Though he is delayed in his journey when he falls into the hands of the Keepers, Matt finally arrives at the Convent of Santa Clara where he is reunited with Maria.



San Luis

San Luis is a city in Atzlan, and this is Matt's destination when he escapes Opium. The Convent of Santa Clara is located in San Luis, and when Matt tells the Keepers near the border that he wants to find a friend in San Luis, they send him to the plankton factory since it is near the city. Ton-Ton eventually helps Matt, Chacho and Fidelito escape from the plankton factory and head towards San Luis in hopes of finding his grandmother.

Oasis

The oasis is a meadow with a small pool of unhealthy water a little past the poppy fields in Opium. Tam Lin takes Matt to the oasis for a picnic to celebrate Matt talking again after being imprisoned by Rosa. Tam Lin teaches Matt about nature and climbing rocks here, actually training him for his escape. He leaves a trunk filled with supplies when El Patron orders him to leave the estate. Tam Lin takes Matt to the oasis and says goodbye to him after El Patron dies and Mr. Alacran orders Tam Lin to destroy Matt. Matt camps here on his last night in Opium, and when Esperanza sends him back to Opium to end the lockdown, Matt flees to the oasis when he learns Tam Lin is dead.

Plankton Factory

The plankton factory is near San Luis, and this is where the Keepers send Matt to work with the other orphans after he crosses the border into Atzlan. At the plankton factory, the Keepers and other boys treat Matt poorly, mocking him as an aristocrat. After Matt and Chacho beat Jorge for threatening to kill Fidelito, they are bound and thrown into the boneyard where Jorge expects them to meet their deaths.

Dragon Hoard

The dragon hoard is El Patron's belongings. He stores everything he is given in an underground vault. Once something belongs to him, El Patron never lets it go. Tam Lin explains the dragon hoard as what a dragon obtains from pillaging castles, and when Matt asks if it makes the dragon happy, Tam Lin says he guesses so, though he had never really thought about it. The dragon hoard includes objects and people, such as the Alacran family and their servants. Tam Lin distributes a special bottle of wine from the year El Patron was born at the wake, according to El Patron's orders, and the poisonous wine kills everyone because El Patron wanted to be buried with his dragon hoard, including the people he feels belongs to him.



Themes

Evil

A major theme in *The House of the Scorpion* is the theme of evil. Though El Patron is the predominant source of evil in this novel, it also appears in other characters in various ways and varying degrees. In his youth, Tam Lin accidentally killed twenty children with a bomb intended for the British Prime Minister, and in *Opium*, he assists El Patron in his evil doings. Because he cannot forgive himself for his crimes, Tam Lin drinks the poisonous wine at El Patron's wake as his way of making amends for his past errors. Rosa imprisons Matt and treats him like an animal. Felicia kills Furball so Matt will be blamed. Tom torments Matt and Maria and shows them MacGregor's clone to create a rift between the friends. Mr. MacGregor uses fetal implants to improve his health. The Keepers in Atzlan treat the Lost Boys poorly, forcing them to labor and beating them if they do not humbly do as they are told.

El Patron is the primary source of evil in this novel. He is a powerful drug lord and the Master of Opium. He steals his extended life from clones, killing them to harvest their organs, and he creates eejits out of people who displease or disobey him. El Patron loves to see his enemies suffer, and his greed is evident in his obsession with his dragon hoard which includes everything ever given to him as well as the people that he feels belongs to him. In fact, his feeling of entitlement leads to his direction that Tam Lin distribute poisoned wine at his wake which kills everyone there so that El Patron can be buried with all of his possessions. Once something belongs to El Patron, it always belongs to him.

Matt's Humanity

The dominant theme in this novel is Matt's humanity or lack thereof. In his youth, he is isolated because he is a clone, and when his presence is discovered by Mr. Alacran, Matt is imprisoned in the Big House by Rosa. He is treated poorly and regarded as an animal by the Alacrans and their servants. Only Celia and Tam Lin treat Matt like a human and expect him to behave as such. Although Maria befriends Matt, she compares him to a wolf and makes allowances for his moral faults because he is not really human. She is embarrassed when he demands a kiss at his birthday party. Tom torments Matt for being a clone, even showing MacGregor's clone to Matt and Maria at the hospital to further alienate Maria from Matt.

When El Patron suffers a heart attack, Matt is captured to be used for a heart transplant. Matt is only a clone, so sacrificing his life to save the life of El Patron is seen as acceptable. Luckily, Celia poisoned Matt with small amounts of arsenic so that his heart is too weak to be used by someone who is already as weak as El Patron. After El Patron dies, Mr. Alacran orders Tam Lin to destroy Matt, but Tam Lin saves Matt by sending him to Atzlan. In Atzlan, the Keepers treat all of the Lost Boys poorly, but they



are especially mean to Matt, deeming him the aristocrat. After Jorge beats Matt, Matt is sent to the infirmary where the tattoo on his foot, reading "Property of Alacran Estate" is discovered, and when Jorge reveals this to the other boys, they stop defending Matt and Chacho. Matt finally reaches the Convent of Santa Clara, and Esperanza explains that Matt is now human since the original Matteo Alacran died and he is the only one still alive.

Matt's Relationships

An important aspect of this novel which reveals Matt's thoughts and how his life affects him is seen in his relationships. As a clone, he has no actual family, but he sees Celia and Tam Lin as the closest thing he has to parents. Celia raises Matt, loves him and protects him. She even incurs El Patron's wrath by poisoning Matt so that he cannot be killed to use for a heart transplant. She is relieved when Matt returns to Opium. Tam Lin, Matt's bodyguard, teaches Matt about climbing mountains and nature in preparation for his escape. After promising to kill him, Tam Lin sends Matt to Atzlan instead, saving his life. Matt is El Patron's clone, so El Patron loves Matt because he loves himself. Although he treats Matt kindly, he only wants to use Matt for a heart transplant as he has done to seven clones previously.

Maria is Matt's only friend in Opium, though she is forbidden to associate with him. She tries to rescue Matt after El Patron's heart attack, but he is taken despite her efforts. Maria is ecstatic to learn Matt is still alive when he arrives at the Convent of Santa Clara. Chacho is a Lost Boy who befriends Matt, and he is punished by being thrown in the boneyard when he helps Matt beat Jorge to prevent Jorge from killing Fidelito. In Atzlan, Matt also befriends Fidelito and Ton-Ton. Matt, Chacho, Fidelito and Ton-Ton escape from the plankton factory together, and when Matt plans his future as the Master of Opium, he knows that he will succeed in his goals to right El Patron's wrongs because he has his friends. He plans to ask Maria, Chacho, Fidelito and Ton-Ton to live with him.



Style

Point of View

The point of view of this novel is third person and limited, proven by the fact that the narrator mainly reports upon Matt's thoughts and feelings while only knowing the thoughts and feelings of other characters occasionally and vaguely. The third-person narrator writes from a point of view which is reliable as far as reporting what Matt knows, but since Matt's knowledge is limited, the narrative can be unreliable at times. This can be seen when Matt's beliefs are proven wrong, such as when Matt believes that El Patron would not have educated him if he had been created for use as spare parts, but El Patron admits his intentions when his heart attack at Steven and Emilia's wedding makes a heart transplant a necessity. The point of view used in this novel is important because it allows the narrative to focus on Matt's experiences as a clone and how he feels as a result of the way he is treated.

The novel is written using a distribution that is approximately three-quarters exposition with the remainder in dialogue. Though there is a fair amount of dialogue in the novel, exposition is used dominantly, especially since the exposition serves to explore Matt's thoughts which are the main focus of the novel. The narrative is told from the viewpoint of Matt exclusively. Though Matt is not the narrator, the third-person narrator focuses solely on Matt's life without any deviation into the viewpoint of other characters.

Setting

The House of the Scorpion is set somewhat in the real world; however, the novel is set in the future in the area between the United States and Mexico which, in the novel, is called Opium. Opium was formerly a part of Mexico, but since becoming its own nation, it has become very isolated. The characters in this novel include people of a high social status, such as the Alacrans and the Mendozas, as well as clones and eejits. The distinction between people, clones and eejits drives much of the novel. The Alacran family is basically considered royalty in Opium because El Patron, the Master of Opium, is their ancestor. Comparatively, Celia, Tam Lin and the other servants are treated much like slaves, and they are always in fear of being turned into eejits, people with computer chips in their brains which prevent them from doing anything but the menial tasks they are commanded to do. The largest contrast is seen through Matt who is treated poorly by most of the characters because he is a clone.

Opium is the main setting of The House of the Scorpion. It is the land between what used to be Mexico and the U. S., but it is now bordered by the U. S. and Atzlan. The country is run by El Patron who controls the opium empire, planting his fields with poppy and using eejits to harvest the narcotic. When Matt finally reaches the Convent of Santa Clara after El Patron's death, Esperanza promises to establish Matt as the new Master of Opium if he promises to end the opium empire and open the border to Aztlan. Matt



spends the first six years of his life living isolated from everyone at Celia's house in the middle of the poppy fields. The poppy fields surround Celia's house and the Big House. They produce Opium's only crop, opium, which is harvested by eejits. The Alacrans live in the Big House on the Alacran Estate in Opium. Matt is imprisoned here by Rosa, and after El Patron frees him from his imprisonment, he resides with Celia in her apartment in the Big House. Matt is treated poorly by the Alacrans and their servants. Atzlan is a nation bordering Opium where Matt flees to avoid being destroyed after El Patron's death, but Matt suffers many hardships in Atzlan at the hands of the Keepers. Maria attends school at the Convent of Santa Clara in San Luis, and this is Matt's intended destination when he escapes from Opium. Though he is delayed in his journey when he falls into the hands of the Keepers, Matt finally arrives at the Convent of Santa Clara where he is reunited with Maria. San Luis is a city in Atzlan, and this is Matt's destination when he escapes Opium. The Convent of Santa Clara is located in San Luis, and when Matt tells the Keepers near the border that he wants to find a friend in San Luis, they send him to the plankton factory since it is near the city. Ton-Ton eventually helps Matt, Chacho and Fidelito escape from the plankton factory and head towards San Luis in hopes of finding his grandmother.

The oasis is a meadow with a small pool of unhealthy water a little past the poppy fields in Opium. Tam Lin takes Matt to the oasis for a picnic to celebrate Matt talking again after being imprisoned by Rosa. Tam Lin teaches Matt about nature and climbing rocks here, actually training him for his escape. He leaves a trunk filled with supplies when El Patron orders him to leave the estate. Tam Lin takes Matt to the oasis and says goodbye to him after El Patron dies and Mr. Alacran orders Tam Lin to destroy Matt. Matt camps here on his last night in Opium, and when Esperanza sends him back to Opium to end the lockdown, Matt flees to the oasis when he learns Tam Lin is dead. The plankton factory is near San Luis, and this is where the Keepers send Matt to work with the other orphans after he crosses the border into Atzlan. At the plankton factory, the Keepers and other boys treat Matt poorly, mocking him as an aristocrat. After Matt and Chacho beat Jorge for threatening to kill Fidelito, they are bound and thrown into the boneyard where Jorge expects them to meet their deaths. The dragon hoard is El Patron's belongings. He stores everything he is given in an underground vault. Once something belongs to him, El Patron never lets it go. Tam Lin explains the dragon hoard as what a dragon obtains from pillaging castles, and when Matt asks if it makes the dragon happy, Tam Lin says he guesses so, though he never really thought about it. The dragon hoard includes objects and people, such as the Alacran family and their servants. Tam Lin distributes a special bottle of wine from the year El Patron was born at the wake, according to El Patron's orders, and the poisonous wine kills everyone because El Patron wanted to be buried with his dragon hoard, including the people he feels belongs to him.

Language and Meaning

The language used in *The House of the Scorpion* varies as Matt travels between Opium and Atzlan. Though by general standards the language is consistently fairly casual and informal, there is a definitive distinction between the language used in Opium in



comparison to the language used in Atzlan; however, this is also indicative of the social status of the people with whom Matt interacts in both locations. In Opium, where Matt interacts with the nobility, the language is fairly proper and more educated when compared to the informal and sometimes profane language used by the Lost Boys whom Matt befriends in Atzlan. Throughout the novel, the sentence construction is mostly grammatically correct. This language is used to show Matt's education and how he is treated as a result of his differences in both Opium and Atzlan. In Opium, he is treated poorly because he is a clone, despite his mental equality to those surrounding him. In Atzlan, Matt is treated poorly because he is deemed an aristocrat since he speaks properly and seems to always be thinking.

The language used in this novel aids comprehension since it provides the reader with a tangible difference between Matt and the other characters in the book. The language characterizes Matt, the Alacrans, the eejits, the Alacrans' servants and the Lost Boys, because each group tends to have unique ideas that are expressed in their dialogue. The novel is written using a distribution that is approximately three-quarters exposition with the remainder in dialogue. Though there is a fair amount of dialogue in the novel, exposition is used dominantly, especially since the exposition serves to explore Matt's thoughts which are the main focus of the novel. Overall, the language aids the writing style, making the novel easy to understand and very interesting.

Structure

This novel is comprised of thirty-eight chapters and three hundred, eighty pages which are divided into five sections as follows: Youth, Middle Age 7-11, Old Age 12-14, Age 14 and La Vida Nueva. The chapters are fairly short, averaging ten pages each in length, and they are titled according to the actions and events which are portrayed in the chapters. The chapters are quite detailed and usually cover a short period of time, generally a few hours or days, but occasionally, the chapters may provide a brief synopsis of a longer period, such as years, especially in the beginning of the novel.

The House of the Scorpion by Nancy Farmer is an intriguing story about a young man who discovers he is a clone and must struggle to learn what this means. Matteo Alacran, a clone harvested from the DNA of El Patron, the Master of Opium, is treated poorly by the Alacran family and servants, despite his superior education and his attempts to fit in. After escaping death by fleeing to the neighboring nation of Atzlan, Matt faces isolation for reasons he never imagined. The House of the Scorpion is an entertaining and thoroughly enjoyable novel. The pace of the novel is fairly quick, and it is very easy to read. The story is generally linear, but El Patron occasionally tells Matt stories about his youth which is comparable to a flashback. Overall, this novel is very entertaining and enjoyable to read.



Quotes

"The cells were perfect- or so it seemed. Each was furnished with all it needed to grow. So much knowledge was hidden in that tiny world! Even Eduardo, who understood the process very well, was awed. The cell already understood what color hair it was to have, how tall it would become, and even whether it preferred spinach to broccoli. It might even have a hazy desire for music or crossword puzzles. All that was hidden in the droplet." Chapter 1: In The Beginning, pages 2-3

"I love you more than anything in the world, never forget that. But you were only loaned to me, mi vida." Celia, Chapter 2: The Little House In The Poppy Fields, page 12

"I've been stupid. I should have know what he- it- was the minute I saw it. No servant would be allowed to keep a child or live away from the others. Benito told me about the situation, only I thought it was living somewhere else. In a zoo, maybe. Wherever those things are kept... Matt's a clone." Steven, Chapter 4: Maria, page 26

"I could kill you. I could bury your body under the floor- and I might do it. Or I might not. You'll never know until it's too late. But one thing you'd better understand: I'm your master now, and if you make me angry-watch out!" Rosa, Chapter 5: Prison, pages 39-40

"Listen, all of you. This is my clone. He's the most important person in my life. If you thought it was any of you sorry, misbegotten swine, think again. Matt is to be treated with respect, just as though I were here in his place. He is to be educated, well fed, and entertained. He is not to be mistreated. Anyone- anyone- who harms Matt will be dealt with severely. Do I make myself clear?" El Patron, Chapter 6: El Patron, pages 62-63

"I've been watching you, with your sharp little eyes. You take in everything everyone says. You're like the old man. I don't know much about this clone business- I was twelve the last time I darkened a schoolroom door- but I know you're a copy of him. It's like the old vulture was being given a second chance... I'll tell you this: El Patron has his good side and his bad side. Very dark indeed is his majesty when he wants to be. When he was young, he made a choice, like a tree does when it decides to grow one way or the other. He grew large and green until he shadowed over the whole forest, but most of his branches are twisted... I'm probably talking over your head, laddie. What I mean to say is this: When you're small, you can choose which way to grow. If you're kind and decent, you grow into a kind and decent man. If you're like El Patron... Just think about it." Tam Lin, Chapter 7: Teacher, pages 69-70

"You never know who's listening to you in that house. You're too young to understand much, and I wouldn't say anything if you were a real boy. But you're a clone. You haven't got anyone to explain things to you. You're alone in a way real humans can't understand. Even orphans can look at pictures and say, 'That's me ma and that's me da.' If you were a real boy, I'd tell you to ask your big brother that tricky little question [about how you were made]. Well, lad, the best way to describe it is this: A long, long



time ago some doctors took a piece of skin from El Patron. They froze it so it would keep. Then, about eight years ago, they took a bit of that skin and grew it into a whole new El Patron. Only they had to start at the beginning with a baby. That was you... The skin was what you might call a photograph. All the information was there to grow a real copy- skin, hair, bones, and brain- of a real man. You're exactly like El Patron when he was seven years old." Tam Lin, Chapter 8: The Eejit In The Dry Field, page 80

"Underneath Matt felt a hollowness. He understood he was only a photograph of a human, and that meant he wasn't really important. Photographs could lie forgotten in drawers for years. They could be thrown away." Chapter 9: The Secret Passage, page 84

"[Matt] was in a rage to learn. He would excel, and then everyone would love him and forget he was a clone." Chapter 9: The Secret Passage, page 91

"I outlive them all as I outlived all my enemies. Of course, I can always make more enemies. You could say I'm a cat with nine lives. As long as there's mice to catch, I intend to keep hunting. And thanks to the doctors, I can still enjoy it. You can start clapping now." El Patron, Chapter 10: A Cat With Nine Lives, page 101

"Father decided implants were immoral, and I honored his decision. He's deeply religious. He thinks God put him on earth for a certain number of years and that he mustn't ask for more." Mr. Alacran, Chapter 11: The Giving And Taking Of Gifts, page 106

"The only one! He was unique. He was special. Matt's heart swelled with pride. If he wasn't human, he might become something even better. Better than Tom, who was an embarrassment to the family." Chapter 13: The Lotus Pond, page 125

"Matt thought he could make Maria understand if he ever got to see her. She'd forgive him because he was a dumb animal and didn't know any better. But Tam Lin had called Matt a human and expected much more from him. Humans, Matt realized, were a lot harder to forgive." Chapter 14: Celia's Story, page 138

"Dear Matt, Im a lousy writer so this wont be long. El Patron says I have to go with him. I cant do anything about it. I put supplise in this chest plus books. Yu never know when yu mite need things. Yor frend Tam Lin." Letter from Tam Lin, Chapter 15: A Starved Bird, Page 149

"Matt didn't... do it... I went to the lotus pond. I was... so angry... at how they treated you at the birthday party. I wanted to kill that abomination El Patron keeps at his heels... But I had to be satisfied with... that filthy, slaving rat Maria called a dog. I keep a small amount of laudanum for my nerves... so I poured one of... my bottles on the hamburger that idiot clone left behind." Felicia, Chapter 16: Brother Wolf, page 163

"[Matt] was afraid, but Tam Lin had taught him it was foolhardy to show weakness. Act like you're in control, the bodyguard had said, and nine times out of ten , you'll get away with it. Most people are cowards underneath." Chapter 17: The Eejit Pens, page 173



"It's not all right. We're bloody lab animals to this lot. We're only well treated until we outlive our usefulness." Tam Lin, Chapter 19: Coming-Of-Age, page 189

"I'm in an awful convent. Oh, it's not too bad. I just don't fit in. I wanted to do charity work in the town, but the Sisters wouldn't let me. Imagine! They think they follow the teachings of Saint Francis, but they'd curl up and die rather than wash a beggar's sores." Maria, Chapter 21: Blood Wedding, page 206

"Maria bounced around the room, talking animatedly. Matt couldn't hear what she said, but there was no question she was giddy with excitement. That was the difference between her and everyone else, he thought. She was overflowing with life. Everything delighted or devastated or fascinated her. There was no middle ground. Next to her Emilia looked faded, and Fani, who was drinking out of a brandy bottle in the corner, was positively drab." Chapter 21: Blood Wedding, page 212

"I'm supposed to be throwing a hysterical fit in my room. Emilia says I'm always getting hysterical. She says you're only the latest edition of Furball; but she's wrong! You're not a dog. You're so much, much more." Maria, Chapter 22: Betrayal, page 217

"If only I'd escaped when I had the chance. Everything was ready for me. Tam Lin gave me maps and food and showed me how to climb mountains. I didn't understand. I didn't want to understand." Matt's thoughts, Chapter 23: Death, page 230

"There were eight of us, and only I lived to grow up. Don't you think I'm owed those lives? There were eight of us. We should have all grown up, but I was the only survivor. I am meant to have those lives! I am meant to have justice!" El Patron, Chapter 23: Death, page 233

"Here's the dirty little secret. No one can tell the difference between a clone and a human. That's because there isn't any difference. The idea of clones being inferior is a filthy lie." Tam Lin, Chapter 24: A Final Good-bye, pages 244-245

"In an odd way it felt as though El Patron were still alive, and in one sense he was. For Matt still existed. As long as he survived, El Patron had not vanished from the world." Chapter 25: The Farm Patrol, page 252

"The orderly production of resources is vital to the general good of the people... Attention to the welfare of the nation is the highest virtue to which a citizen can aspire... Work is freedom. Freedom is work. It's hard but it's fair." Raul, Chapter 26: The Lost Boys, page 265

"Why don't you put a computer chip in the horse's brain? Then it wouldn't matter how many legs it had... I don't see much difference between that and sawing off the extra leg. What you're after is a horse that works hard and doesn't waste time looking at flowers... We recite the Five Principles of Good Citizenship and the Four Attitudes Leading to Right-Mindfulness every time we want to eat. You keep telling us the orderly production of resources is vital to the general good of the people. It's obvious we're supposed to follow the rules and not walk slowly through meadows. But horses aren't as



smart as people. It makes sense to program them with computer chips." Matt, Chapter 27: A Five-Legged Horse, page 274

"Diseased opinions not suited to the good of the people have to be cleaned out with self-criticism." Jorge, Chapter 29: Washing a Dusty Mind, page 291

"Some boys have to learn the hard way. They have to be broken and mended and broken again until they learn to do what they're told. It may be simple, like sweeping a floor, but they do it eagerly to keep from being broken again. And they do it forever, for as long as they live." "In other words, you want to turn me into a zombie." Jorge and Matt, Chapter 30: When The Whales Lost Their Legs, page 302

"As Tam Lin once said, a jailer has a hundred things on his mind, but a prisoner has only one: escape." Chapter 31: Ton-Ton, page 311

"Yes, but you don't mean it. You go through the motions, but in your heart you're still an aristocrat. I puzzled over it a long time. Then I realized the thing that makes an aristocrat is the presence of a lackey. If I remove the lackey, poof! No more aristocrat. Assume the position, Fidelito." Jorge, Chapter 32: Found Out, page 318

"Tam Lin says rabbits give up when they're caught by coyotes. He says they consent to die because they're animals and can't understand hope. But humans are different. They fight against death no matter how bad things seem, and sometimes, even when everything's against them, they win." Matt, Chapter 33: Boneyard, page 328

"That's a vicious lie! Someone's trying to undermine the reputation of the Keepers! Rumors like that are spread by idiots who want orphans to lie around like pampered house cats. We know they're squalid little parasites until they're reeducated into good citizens. If any laudanum was found, it was planted there by the police!" Carlos, Chapter 36: The Castle On The Hill, pages 361-362

"Through [Maria's] eyes, Matt saw the world as an infinitely hopeful place." Chapter 37: Homecoming, page 364

"First of all, Matt, you aren't a clone... Oh, you were a clone. There's no mistake about that. But we're talking about international law now. International law is my specialty. In the first place, clones shouldn't exist... but if they do exist, they're livestock, as you say. That makes it possible for them to be slaughtered like chickens or cattle... You can't have two versions of the same person at the same time. One of them- the copy- has to be declared an unperson. But when the original dies, the copy takes his place... It means you really are El Patron. You have his body and his identity. You own everything he owned and rule everything he ruled. It means you're the new Master of Opium." Esperanza, Chapter 37: Homecoming, pages 366-367

"Listen to me. El Patron ruled his empire for one hundred years. All that time he was adding to his dragon hoard, and he wanted to be buried with it. Unfortunately- Unfortunately, the dragon hoard included people." Celia, Chapter 38: The House of Eternity, pages 375-376



"Late that night Matt sat by the fire and smelled the good mesquite smoke as it spiraled up into the starry sky. Tomorrow he would begin the task of breaking down the empire of Opium. It was a huge and terrifying job, but he wasn't alone. He had Chacho, Fidelito, and Ton-Ton to cheer him on. He had Celia and Daft Donald to advise him and Maria to be everyone's conscience. He also had Esperanza, but he couldn't see a way out of that. With everyone's help, it would get done. 'You can do it,' said Tam Lin from the darkness on the other side of the fire. 'I know I can,' said Matt, smiling back." Chapter 38: The House of Eternity, page 380



Topics for Discussion

Why is Matt treated so badly by the Alacrans?

Compare and contrast Matt and El Patron.

How does El Patron feel about Matt?

In what way(s) is Matt naive?

How does Tam Lin play a paternal role toward Matt?

Why does Mr. Alacran want to kill Matt, and how does Matt escape death?

What happens to Matt when he escapes from Opium?

According to Esperanza, who is Matt now that El Patron is dead, and what does she want him to do?