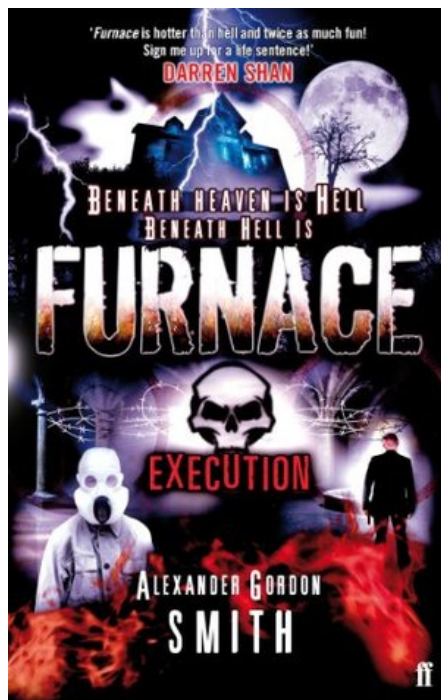




Execution

Alexander Gordon Smith

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The whole world has become a prison, and Alfred Furnace is its master. Monsters rule the streets, beasts of pure fury that leave nothing but murder and madness in their wake. Those who do not die are turned, becoming slaves to Furnace's reign of cruelty. It is a war to end all wars, one that will leave the planet in ruins. I am a monster too. I am one of Alfred Furnace's children. And I am the only one who can stop him. I have to find a way to use my powers to destroy Furnace, but in doing so I risk becoming the very force that kills us all. I don't know if I am the executed or the executioner. I don't know who will die: me, Furnace or the entire human race. All I know is that one way or another, it all ends today.

Execution Details

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From Reader Review Execution for online ebook

Tyler says

Personal response- I enjoyed this book very much it was an excellent closing to the series. there is a lot of imagery used throughout this book and it made it seem as if I was in the action and I enjoyed that.

Plot -Alex is brought by the army, along with Zee, Simon, and Lucy, to St. Margaret's hospital where he, Simon and other Furnace creatures are studied by Panettierre and others while the plague's spreading through and out of the country. During the experiments, Alex drifts in and out of sleep where he experiences Furnace's memories. With Zee's visit, Alex realizes that he's expendable. He doesn't have any information about the nectar reproduction. So Panettierre kills him but is revived by Sam. After Cross' death, Alex's considered Furnace's right-hand man; therefore, Sam and some berserkers help he and his friends to escape. With Panettierre and her army after them, they spend the night in Alex's house where he finds out that his parents haven't abandoned him as he remembers. They have been trying to get him out of prison, and then they finally reach the island where Furnace is. At last, Alex meets Furnace who's still alive by being attached to a machine and wants Alex to be his heir. Alex is the only one who could handle the nectar and remember his history. That's what the Stranger needs to survive. He accepts Furnace's offer. In doing so, Alex's nectar is replaced by the Stranger's blood in Furnace's veins. Furnace is turned to dust and the Stranger manipulates Alex in continuing the war. However, with his friends' support, Alex ends it by killing all of Furnace's creatures, including Simon, through telephatic images of freedom and peace. When Panettierre finally reaches them, she receives all of Alex's blood and dies while Alex is saved by receiving a nectar transfusion. Alex, Zee, and Lucy are then brought to a military base where he's interrogated about what's happened. As time passes, the three of them and the whole world are trying to live a better, normal life, and Alex goes under the knife in order to become human again.

Characterization-

Alex Sawyer - The main character. After escaping the army who wants the nectar for themselves, he kills Furnace by becoming his heir and receiving the stranger's blood in Furnace's veins. He's in control of the war now, but with his friends' help, he manages to end it by killing all of Furnace's creatures.

Zee Hatcher - One of Alex's closest friends. He's immune to the nectar

Simon Rojo-Flores - A failed mutant who assists Alex and Zee He dies at the end of the book

Lucy Wells - A girl who tags along with Alex, Zee, and Simon after they meet in Fugitives. Her father was a policeman who's been killed during the Summer of Slaughter, therefore, she hates them at first.

Warden Cross - One of the main antagonists whose eyes are so full of madness, hatred and rancid glee that meeting them is like watching yourself die a million times over. He's over 100 years old. He's been 'adopted' by Furnace during WWII and since then, he's regularly taken the nectar. Furnace forgets about him and wants Alex to be his right-hand man. Warden Cross is eventually drained of his own blood by Alex and fed to the wheezers in Fugitives.

Alfred Furnace - He is the founder of the Furnace Penitentiary and the main character in the series. He communicates telepathically with Alex and the other creatures through the nectar. He is over 300 years old. He was born in Hungary in the 18th century and he's survived so long because of the Stranger's blood, the base product of the nectar. When he was a boy, he was framed for murdering his younger brother József. The real killer was the Stranger who was crucified by the townspeople. Instead of death he choose the Stranger's

offer. He received immortality through the Stranger's blood. For centuries, he traveled across Europe, creating soldiers with his nectar in order to make a world where there's only strength and equality. However, Furnace isn't in control of his actions. The Stranger. In Execution he finally dies and is replaced by Alex.

General Hamilton - A general who gives Alex, Zee, and Lucy a lift from the island to a military base.

Alice Panettierre - A colonel who attempts to harness the powers of Alex, Simon and other Furnace creatures through blood transfusions, surgeries and other unpleasant experiments in order to create its own army to win the war. She dies when she receives a transfusion of the stranger's blood.

The Stranger in the orchard - An unidentifiable being who is the representation of all evil. He's a parasite who feeds off and manipulates his host, who must be a kid in order to survive and destroy all humanity. He dies while his blood's injected in Panettierre.

Sam - A blacksuit who assists Alex and his friends in their escape from the hospital. After leaving Alex's house, he is killed by Panettierre and her men while trying to create a diversion to help Alex, Zee, Simon and Lucy escape.

Impact of settings- The settings throughout this book really brought a closing to the series. I think if they changed, it wouldn't have worked with the story line.

Recommendation- I would recommend this book to mature young adults, male or female.

Shandra says

Another wild ride in the Escape from Furnace series!!! I'm sort of at a loss of what to say about this one. I'm sad to see the series come to a close, but I'm also perfectly content with where it ends. I'm also happy that characters I've come to care for finally have closure, good or bad. This book gave a lot of back history on Mr. Alfred Furnace and helps to put a lot of pieces in place. I really enjoyed this series for a lot of reasons. None of the books disappointed me and I just love Zee!!! Poor kids really went through a lot during this series!!

Kaleb Schoenick says

Personal Response:

The book that I read was *Execution* the final book in the *Escape From The Furnaces* series. I was really excited to read the final book, knowing how long the journey was to get to this point. Each of the characters have grown in their own way. Each character has a unique personality that enhances the story. The book answers a lot of the questions I had from the previous books. I especially like the way the author tied the books together at the end with a callback to the previous books.

Plot:

The story continues from the last book almost exactly where it ended. Alex has been captured by the army. Who begin to conduct test on him, not caring whether he lives or dies. Ironically, Alex is saved by a blacksuit, who tells Alex he is the new general. Alex and his friends escape with the help of a blacksuit and two berserkers, who Alex can now control with his new powers. The blacksuit leads Alex and his friends to an isolated island where they must have one last confrontation with the real Alfred Furnace.

Characterization:

Alex is at the final chapter of his story, and has grown significantly since his first book. Alex is now at the height of his power, possibly one of the strongest characters in the book. Alex has become somber from the brutal past events. However, when he is with his friends he feels like a regular kid. Alex has a deep devotion to his friends, and will do whatever it takes to get them through the events of the book. Major Panettiere is the new antagonist who is hellbent on acquiring Zee, to hopefully cure the nectar. Panettiere is a cruel and calculating leader, obsessed with winning the war by any means necessary. She is willing to sacrifice lives to accomplish her objective.

Setting:

The story of *Execution* takes place in an apocalyptic Britain, set in modern time. The world has been ravaged by fighting between the government and the Blacksuits. The story takes the reader from a military complex, to Alex's home, and finally to an isolated island for a final showdown.

Recommendation:

I would recommend this book to 8th-12th grade students, both male and female. I recommend this age group due to the even intense violence and gore. I am giving this book a five out of five stars for being able to effectively end a huge series.

Blake Palmer says

This is the fifth book in the escape from furnace series. This one starts with alex turning into a complete monster with his mind snapping. luckily Alex's friend save him and he becomes himself. later on in the book alex finds out that he can control berserkers which he uses to his advantage by using them to track down and murder Furnace. The book ends sadly in my opinion because Alex's friend Simon dies which was my favorite character who was still alive.

Diabolica says

I am free

And oddly enough this conclusion has left no loose ends. Nothing to make me cling on the story and worry about its conclusion.

It also didn't hurt that a lot of people died. So that tied up a lot of ends....

This series was such a ride. So many times when the coaster just kept going down, as the situations just got progressively worse of the characters.

But there were also times of comic relief, which really helped to alleviate the constant "they are all going to die soon" vibe.

The fourth and fifth books got a *little* weird, what with the flashbacks and history of the nectar. Very zombiesque, without zombies.

Bonus: My favorite character didn't die.

But a wonderful conclusion. No complaints there. And a happy ending for all...

those who survived.

Kassi Tews says

Personal Response : I absolutely loved this book. I could not stop reading this because of how intense it was. I think the author ended this book in the best way possible. The series came together and Furnace was finally killed. I really enjoyed how adventurous this book was.

Plot : Alex has finally killed Warden Cross and was the new warden. The blacksuits would listen to his commands and respect him. Alex and his friends were rescued from the tower by a special forces team. Colonel P made it seem like they were there to help the kids. The Colonel really wanted to figure out how the nectar worked and made her own army. She drained Alex of all the nectar to see if it would kill him. Zee was immune to the nectar so Colonel P was going to kill him in order to make an antidote. Alfred Furnace commanded the blacksuits to save Alex and the kids from the hospital. When they broke out, Alex decided to go back home to search for his parents. He discovered that his parents tried to bring him home because they really did love him. Alex was so angry he set out on Alfred Furnace and eventually he killed him. Alex ended the war and saved the human race.

Characterization : Alex was able to finish what he started and save the world. For how young Alex was, he was very mature and could handle tough situations. Everyone depended on Alex and he always came out on top. His character has grown bigger and stronger throughout the series. Alex took on so much responsibility without even knowing he could end the plague. He never gave up hope and always kept his friends. Alex will be known as a great leader who saved the entire human race.

Impact of Setting : Throughout the story the setting was constantly changing. Most of it was traveling to find Alfred Furnace on some island off a coast. I think it is important they knew where he was or they never would have completed their journey. The time has not changed much since the last book, maybe by a few days. It took place into the future just like the rest of the series.

Thematic Connection : The theme of this story was trust. Alex was not sure if he could save the world but his friends trusted him to do the right thing. No matter what his friends never doubted him even when things were beginning to fail. Another theme would be sacrifice. Alex had to sacrifice so much to be able to fight this war and end it. Even if Alex would have to kill himself to save the world and his friends, he would.

Audience : I think anyone who likes Science Fiction or Action would really enjoy this book. I would say

anyone over 15 years old would really be able to understand the hardships the group goes through. Boys or girls could read this book because it has 2 main character roles with both genders. I would not recommend this book if you like easy to follow story lines.

Adam says

In 2004, the year I graduated from high school, "young adult" was a wishy-washy label attached haphazardly to all sorts of books, the most popular being *Harry Potter*, that were, yes, geared towards younger audiences but were also clean and slightly patronizing. Sure, Harry Potter learned some valuable life lessons, faced down seemingly invincible foes, and grew as both a wizard and a person--what teenager can't relate to that in some way?--but overall the books in that series, as well as most others published at the time, were pretty inoffensive; if you weren't a complete idiot who read too much into wizardry, Harry's journey was almost quaint in a way, like a bedtime story expanded over a few thousand pages. Rowling's series was all the rage when I was in high school, and while the subject matter didn't appeal to me, I gave the first book a shot: I read it in a few days, thought it was a perfectly acceptable story, and never read the rest of the series, content that my prejudices about "young adult" or teen-oriented literature were accurate.*

Five years later, I found myself standing in front of teenagers eight hours a day, five days a week, attempting to teach them some of the "serious" literature I so enjoyed when I was their age. Sometimes I succeeded, more often than not I failed...but a source of pride that first year was my avoidance of anything "young adult." *So patronizing*, I told myself, *writing down to teenagers*. I thought it was disrespectful to my students--all those authors writing in a certain style about certain topics that were appealing to some stereotypical 16-year-old out there somewhere; they should be reading books by adults, for adults, because that's what they were destined to be. That image of "young adult" that was so thoroughly welded to my brain as a teenager wouldn't come undone, even as student after student talked about their newest book with such wide-eyed enthusiasm. The books they read--for pleasure, not for assignment--were about dating, drug abuse, car chases, demons, zombies, possessions and exorcisms, sci-fi adventures, and on and on. I was caught a little off-guard, and I had a choice: adapt, or be stuck in the past with my strange book prejudices.

Eventually, they wore me down, and I began reading so-called "young adult" books. At first there were one or two, checked out skeptically and with a little embarrassment from the local library, and soon there were more...so much so that by my fourth year as a teacher, I was reading books that were either recommended to me by students or presented through book reports and projects and sounded too interesting to pass up. They were different, well-written, and mature in their own ways--not patronizing, but clear, straightforward, and driven almost exclusively by plot instead of meaning or academic ambiguity. The authors knew their audience and what they wanted to read, which made the stories all the more enjoyable; for someone whose love of reading had been thoroughly debased by five years of constant undergrad analysis and literary theory, it was like being led out of a prison from which I could've escaped at any time.

This inevitably brought me to Alexander Gordon Smith's *Escape From Furnace* series, which I began reading in December of last year and finished this past week, April 2013. What began as a simple, albeit strange and ominous story of a young boy--Alex Sawyer--who is falsely arrested and imprisoned in the titular hellhole, Furnace, became over five books the fascinating, horrifying, and consistently surprising story of Sawyer's transformation--physically, mentally, emotionally--into something far more than the skinny hoodlum he began as. There's very little I can do review-wise to explain what makes Smith's series such a good read, other than to just list the reasons one by one.

1. It's Honest. Life sometimes sucks. It's a fact teenagers know all too well and adults are too willing to forget. Their own experiences are shrouded by embarrassment and faded by time, and they dismiss the

problems of adolescence as little more than the complaints of lazy whiners who don't understand dedication, hard work, and perseverance. But life does suck, undeniably so at times and never more clearly--or unfairly--than during those teen years when adults lecture on and on about preparing their kids for "the real world" without actually ceding any sort of real freedom or responsibility. Sawyer's experiences are beyond anything the average teenager would have to face--by the end of the series, he's literally a Frankenstein's monster, a shell of what he used to be--but he still faces adults who take advantage of his sub-status in society, manipulate him emotionally, judge him by his mistakes, refuse to trust him, and so on. He takes on leadership roles to the point that, by the fifth book, he has become the entire world's one and only savior...and afterwards, in a fantastic epilogue, earns the trust and respect of every adult he encounters. Yes, life sucks--and being a teenager doubly sucks--but Smith shows his readers that, at the end of the road, there is freedom from it all.

2. It's Graphic. J.K. Rowling...Lemony Snicket...Christopher Paolini...not a single one of them would have ever even considered including one-tenth of the graphic elements Smith includes in his book. These range from scenes of torture, vivisection, Frankenstein-style dismembering and reassemblies, and cross-species transformations to murder, visceral to-the-death fight scenes, decapitations, bombings, immolations, and near cannibalism. And Smith writes them with an increasingly normalcy to his style, which is perhaps the most unnerving aspect to the whole thing. By the fifth book, this is the world Sawyer lives in now, and he's used to it...so we should be, too. Because, after all, we live in a world that is just as hideous and dispassionate towards others, and it's important for everyone, even teenagers and "impressionable" young people, to understand this: there are people out there who are violent, vengeful, and downright evil, and they do unspeakable things to other people. The key is not to avoid these things; the key is to acknowledge that they exist, resist the immediate gut reactions that say "turn away" or "this doesn't concern you," and decide how it can be stopped, how it can be prevented, how it affects even those of us who live half a world away from it. We cannot keep these events hidden in the shadows, like a mutated young boy in a below-ground prison; they must come to the light, and with it, the solution. Otherwise, we will face the consequences of our ignorance and inaction.

3. It's Surprising. Can't kill off main characters in a book? Smith begs to disagree. It's almost unnerving how willingly Smith dispenses with his characters, even those who have been with Sawyer since the beginning. In a way, it's refreshingly honest--see #1 above--and also the way a good story should be told: without predictability, willing to do what the reader doesn't expect--maybe even what the reader doesn't want--for the sake of advancing the plot, forcing the characters to adapt and grow, and building the tension in search of a thundering climax. Any shock I felt over Sawyer's torture and transformation--becoming the Frankenstein's monster--was quickly overpowered by a dozen more shocking moments in the book...related to their escape, to the nectar, to London itself and the plague, to the Warden, to Albert Furnace. I finished one book, thought about how the next book would most likely proceed--based on cliches and little else--and was happily proven wrong every time, and almost always from the first two or three chapters.

4. It's Hopeful. As one of my students said to me, "It ends with one of the best speeches about hope in all the books I've read." I don't disagree, but it's not just the closing speech in Smith's fifth book that offers hope to the readers--it's the entire series. By the closing pages of *Execution*, Alex Sawyer has endured more heartbreak, torture, violence, hatred, isolation, war, and death than...well, just about anyone. (This is a sci-fi book, after all.) There are more than a few moments where he turns himself over to the darker side of his nature, often far past the point of no return, and still he comes back. He remembers his friends, his name, his parents, the mistakes he's made, and the journey he's endured...and all of it gives him strength when virtually the entire world is against him. It's a clear message that, even at the lowest points in your life, when everything and everyone around you seems to be working against you, when you feel like something other than the good and decent person you are--maybe even when you feel like a failure, a loner, a freak, a monster--you have the strength and attitude to rise above it.

5. It Doesn't Talk Down. Alex Sawyer is a teenager, beginning to end, but other than the stupid decisions he makes that get him in trouble in the first place--mistakes that, honestly, can be made by anyone, regardless of age--he doesn't talk or act stereotypically. Had Smith interrupted the story at any point and written passages intended to lecture or teach a message--moments of the author banging his message on the heads of his readers--all would have been lost. But when Smith feels the need to do this, he has his characters embody these epiphanies--slowly, quietly, almost like a sunrise coming over them and warming their faces. And more often than not, we see them coming, too, sometimes from miles away, but still we wait for Alex to realize them with anticipation: it's yet another turn in the story, another chance for this transformed young man to grow by yet another small degree. Sawyer is allowed to be a full character--a person--rather than a soapbox spouting cliches or words of wisdom. And really, that's what "young adult" literature is: not literature for "young adults," no, because that would be patronizing; rather, it's about all the little changes we undergo when we're young--the everyday triumphs, the moments of understanding and overcoming, the failures and lessons that come with failing, the leaving behind of who we once were and gradual becoming of who we need to be--and how those changes never truly leave us. We all become adults one day, but by keeping the memories and lessons with us, constantly reminding ourselves of where we came from, we stay young.

*Even as a teenager I was a lit snob, my locker filled with books by Kurt Vonnegut, Joseph Heller, and Jerzy Kosinski.

This review was originally published at There Will Be Books Galore.

Whitney says

We have finally reached the conclusion of *Escape From Furnace* and what a wild ride it's been. From blacksuits, mutant dogs, wheezers, and the warden, to murderous gangs, berserkers, and rats, we've made it to the end. Since this is the last book in the series this review will be a mix of me reviewing the series as a whole and of *Execution*.

In the final installment of *Escape From Furnace*, we follow Alex, Simon, Lucy, and Zee as they seek to destroy the monster who started this all; Alfred Furnace. In the process Alex has turned into a monster, but he's managed to hold onto himself. Alex is also the only person who can destroy Furnace. But can he do that before Furnace destroys him? Will the executioner become the executed?

Plot

The plot in *Execution* is a continuation of the later half of the plot from the previous book, *Fugitives*. Now that Alex and friends are out of Furnace they deal with the new threat that is Alfred Furnace and his horrifying beasts that he unleashed upon the world. The main plot now is to kill Furnace before his virus spreads across the entire world.

The original plot from the first three books was wonderful. It felt like *Lockdown*, *Solitary*, and *Death Sentence* were already somewhat planned out when Smith started working on his series. It was very simple; escape from Furnace Penitentiary. The problem came when *Fugitives* was published. The two final books felt less refined and they read as if there were a Part II to the original series instead of a continuation of the previous books. Maybe if the five books had been split apart into different series, the first three being one series and the last two being another. The plot doesn't flow as well from *Death Sentence* to *Fugitives* and *Execution* as it did from books one, two, and three. It's probably because the plot suddenly got more

complex. You can't go from a simple plot to a complex one without giving some hints to what's in store for the readers.

This was the biggest problem I had with the plot in the last two books. It felt... disconnected from the rest of the books. I think this was because of poor planning on Smith's part. In the Q&A's in the back of the series he admits that he didn't do a lot of planning and it shows. Smith says he didn't plan out Alex's escape and let his characters do what they wanted. That was a very good decision on his part. The first part of the series had that organic feeling. He messed up when he let the story flow without direction when the plot got heavier. *That* was when he should have taken the reins a bit and planned out a little more.

You can almost see him scrambling to tie up loose ends with the introduction of Panettierre and the Stranger. I felt like they were both created with the sole purpose of making sure that everything was tied up at the end and it gave the plot a very hollow, unreal feeling, unlike the beginning of the series. The scrambling he did plot-wise is what made me bump *Execution* to four stars. *Execution* being the final book is what saved it from getting three stars, honestly.

Writing

I've practically sang from the rooftops about Smith's writing all throughout this series. The writing was emotional and very gripping. Things weren't over or under explained at all. Smith, more times than not, knew the right amount of words to use. I did have some problems picturing things he described but that might have been a personal issue as I haven't really seen anybody else complain about it.

In *Execution* Smith's writing skills have really been put to the test. The urgency, the emotions, the horror, are all there. These feelings are so interwoven into the pages of the book that you can feel yourself physically reacting to them. He did such a good job at writing these feelings that he deserves an award.

Make no mistake, though. There are some faults to his writing. When the scenes aren't full of action they tend to get very boring. Nearly all of *Solitary* and *Fugitives* was slow and dull. And the first half of *Execution* seemed to drag along as well. It took me nearly four hours to get through the first half of *Execution* but only around two to get through the second half.

There's also this weird thing he does where he uses the same descriptors over and over again. Every wheezer had "piggy eyes" or eyes like coal. And every berserker was "impossibly big". His editor should have caught those and squirted him with a water bottle.

As I mentioned above, Smith had a very "go with the flow" approach to *Escape From Furnace*, where he didn't plan a lot out and let his characters do what they wanted. His writing reflects this. The writing flows very well (up until it hits *Fugitives*, that is). I've compared Smith to Darren Shan and this is one of the reasons why. Shan makes his writing flow wonderfully as well.

Characters

For the whole series we had a total of five major characters: Alex, Donovan, Zee, Simon, and Lucy. Lucy isn't a character who gets a lot of development. She doesn't get any, really. Donovan was a great character that, unfortunately, didn't make it past the first book. I feel like even though Donovan had the shortest run he was the most developed character. He was fun-loving, a wee bit of a slacker, and an all around good person.

Alex, Zee, and Simon had the most characterization second only to Donovan. They're our three musketeers in the series. They're the ones we're supposed to care about the most and I feel like Smith did well in making us care for them. Any time I thought Zee or Simon were going to die I had to stop myself from flipping

ahead to see if they were going to live.

Despite Alex's characterization, I didn't like him as much as I was probably supposed to. I think it was because how Smith wrote the things that happened to Alex. Even though he did have a rough time throughout the series, he still got out of things relatively "easily". This is just a personal thing and I don't think other people share my sentiments.

Still, with all I've said over my other reviews, I still love these characters. They are well written characters (with the exception of Lucy) and I would have loved to go on other adventures with them.

Things I Didn't Like

Despite my love of this series there were quite a few things I did not like. I will list them and then go over them in more detail: Furnace's backstory, the feeling of the lack of actual planning, Donovan versus Zee, the too "perfect" ending, plot holes, and Panettierre/the Stranger.

The first thing I didn't like was the lack of planning that went along with the story. The lack of planning wasn't all bad. In fact, it worked well when Smith wrote the first three books. When he goes to *Fugitive*, though, he should have been more decisive. The plot for the later two books was more removed from the first three in a way that pointed to lack of planning. If Smith does another series then he needs to take the reigns when it comes to more complex plots. Not planning things worked well for the simple plot of escaping from Furnace but not for the more complex plot of defeating Furnace.

The second problem was Furnace's backstory. This goes hand in hand with the lack of planning and the Panettierre/Stranger issue. I honestly feel like the whole Furnace/Stranger thing was created to try to explain the mystery behind the nectar. And then Panettierre was created to try and tie up the loose end that the Stranger created. All of this points back to Smith's lack of planning. If he would have planned this then it would definitely come out better. This was a very weak spot in the series and it could have done a lot better.

The third problem was the ending. Let's be real, it was too perfect. Yes, (view spoiler) did die, but there have been stories where nobody's died and they haven't felt like Smith's ending. What happened here, I believe, was a case where Smith liked his characters too much to kill them but he knew that somebody had to die so that the ending wasn't too, too perfect. Our little group escaped relatively scot-free. I mean, yes, there was the psychological damage, but other than that, they made it out of the series pretty well off. Smith needed to realize what he was doing and make the ending more realistic. As much as I like the characters I felt like they all should have died.

The fourth problem is the plot holes. The Stranger/Panettierre were created to fix the biggest plot hole, but Smith still let some slip by. For example, if Simon didn't obey the command to fight then why did he have to obey Alex's final command? This made no sense and it ties in with my problem above. Another example is why could Alex suddenly survive on human blood? He stated earlier in the book that switching out nectar for human blood was slowly killing him, yet in the end, when there's no more nectar, he's allowed to survive on regular blood. There's also the whole thing where Alex said multiple times since his transformation that nectar erased memories but when it became convenient to the plot he remembered things that had been erased. There are probably more things but these were the plot holes that I could think of.

My final problem is what roles Donovan versus Zee have. I would have liked the series ten times more if Donovan and Zee's roles were switched. If Zee was the one to be taken away by the blood watch and Donovan escaped with Alex and Simon. Donovan was the only character of color in all five books, yet *he* was the first one to die. And even then, only one other main character died! Alex had an equally strong friendship between Donovan and Zee. It was only Donovan's death that made their relationship that much

stronger. So why shouldn't have Donovan lived instead?

Diversity

One thing that was in the *Escape From Furnace* series that normally isn't shown is mental disorders. While not outright stated, it's very easy to understand that there were multiple mental disorders at play with our characters. There was depression, delusions, and PTSD, to name a few. You could probably argue the case for a few others as well. This is nice because mental disorders are rarely shown, but you also can't give Smith too much credit because he never actually addresses them.

There were two female characters that got names and lines in the series. Lucy and Panettierre. Lucy wasn't really that important of a character. She was just *there* for the last two books. And Panettierre seemed like a good female character until you get the feeling she was just create to tie up loose ends. She also ends up becoming the "goes mentally disturbed for power" character. This is a trope I find many female characters are pushed into. Smith doesn't get any brownie points for adding these two ladies to his story.

And then we come to our possibly two characters of color. The first is Donovan, Alex's old cellmate who doesn't make it past the second book. He's described as having dark skin so I'm pretty sure he's black. The other character is Simon Rojo-Flores. Simon is the other possible POC. He has a Spanish last name but it's never confirmed if he's Indigenous South American or just a white Spaniard. Since it's not confirmed our total number of characters of color stay at one, for the first book only.

There isn't a lot of diversity to speak of in this series. You have one confirmed character of color, non-mentioned mental disorders, and two female characters that aren't even proper characters.

Overall

I highly, *highly* recommend the *Escape From Furnace* series to anybody. Especially those who like Darren Shan's books. The books do have their bad points where things get boring or don't make much sense, but I suggest you power on to the end. I don't think you'd regret it much. I enjoyed the ride and I thank Alexander Gordon Smith for taking me on it. He created a great series that was unique and fun to read.

Kimberly says

I have truly enjoyed this series, immensely! I have seen every word, phrase, paragraph, every action, every character and every location all very CLEARLY in my mind when reading these freakin' awesome books. I am in love with this author now.

This book was the ending to our adventure or rather misadventures and horrors with Alex and the Furnace Penitentiary, along with its monsters and horrid occurrences. One day I could see this series making it to the big-screen. I would love to beg people to read these and give them a chance. Each book is better than the one before it. I have no fingernails now after reading the entire series.

A lot of what happened will stay with me and Ill think about Alex the main character and his friends and the horrors they went through for a long time to come. I dont think Ill forget any of this.

Bravo to you Mr Smith! This was phenomenal. A superb author! I think it will be hard for me to find any books to top these. You have set the bar very high Alexander. Thank you for taking us on this amazing roller-coaster of a journey. I saw it all, you spin a story like you own a golden word loom.

Steven R. McEvoy says

It is always a little sad when you come to the end of a series of books that you really enjoy. That is how I approached this fifth and final book in the Escape from Furnace series by Alexander Gordon Smith. It has been a wild ride as we have followed Alex Sawyer go from a young child really, being framed for murder, to seeing him challenge Alfred Furnace for control of all who have been infected with the Nectar. This series was dark, gripping and compelling. Every time I started one of the books in the series it was like being drawn into a dark vision of a possible future. It is set in a future that starts by living in fear and reactionary responses to that fear. This story was amazing and wrapped up the series nicely. There is however an online epilogue available that appends another chapter to the story.

In the first book we were told, 'Beneath Heaven is Hell, and beneath Hell is Furnace'. Now all of Alfred Furnaces' creatures are on the loose and rampaging across the country. In this book Alex and his friends realize that they thought when they got to the Army everything would be ok. But Furnaces' rats and berserkers are tearing through the army across the continent and if rumors are true, even off-continent. Alex feels drawn to Furnace for the confrontation he promised. And somehow the Black Suits and other creatures of Furnace are heeding Alex's wishes. England is devastated by this war between creatures of the nectar and normal civilians. And it is a war that Furnace is winning. Throw in the mix a scientist who is losing her mind or already has. Alex and his friends must once again fight to escape their captors and hunt down Furnace for the final confrontation.

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Read the rest of the review and with links to other reviews by the authors on my blog [Book Reviews and More](#).

Kimberly says

PLOT:

Execution was about Alex, a prisoner from Furnace that turned into Alfred Furnace's freak reincarnation in the last book. He began this book with the mindset of Alfred Furnace, the antagonist character in this series, who hated the weak and wanted to build a new land with all strong men. Alex, a weak kid who hated Alfred, had battled through so many "adventures" trying to find Furnace to kill him. He started out the book by telling the readers that he has become evil and that Alex Sawyer is no more. He said that Alex died when he became Alfred, and he needed to tell Alex's story because Alex had been through so much. He then told the story as if Alex was not a part of him, but through the book, he started telling the readers as though he was Alex and he lived it all.

Many events that take place that show that Alex was a good person who has been trying very hard to correct his mistake of letting all of the prisoners go out onto the streets. He has been in many battles and killed many monsters of Furnace's creation. In the beginning of the book, when Alex is evil, he is captured by the army. The doctors/surgeons in the army had captured a lot of beasts and were dissecting them/putting them into surgery to see how they had been created. They were trying to harness the nectar for themselves to create their own monster army. During Alex's stay there, he learned that the beasts called berserkers were willing to protect him at all costs. Alex then escaped, with the help of a blacksuit and a few berserkers, and found Zee and Lucy. They all got out before the army could recapture them. Then, the group set off to find Alfred. All along this journey, Alfred has been leading Alex to himself, but according to Alex, he had a sense that could track Alfred. The group found Furnace on an island, but in the distance they saw that the army had, too. An epic battle took place there consisting of Furnace's creations (berserkers and leviathans), and the army.

Meanwhile, Alex and Alfred were hidden deep in the basement of the mansion that was on the island. They fought for a while, but in the end, Alex “plugged” himself into the machine that was keeping Furnace alive in order to kill him. He killed Furnace, but in doing so, he became him. Furnace’s blood was tainted with some evil being that, when it entered Alex’s body, it turned Alex evil as well. The book doesn’t end there, though. The author gives the series as best as a happy ending it could get.

CHARACTERIZATION:

Throughout this series, Alex has changed a lot. He was a weak, little boy who scared, accused, and alone. His parents left him to the prison, he had no more friends, and he was in Furnace Penitentiary- a hell of unimaginable nightmares. Alex became stronger with everything that happened to him. He eventually made friends, he got smarter, and learned how to get out of the prison. He was very lucky, because with each attempt of freedom, he was never killed. He only got thrown back in prison or had experiments done to him. He never gave up hope, and held on to everything he had. In the end of this series, he became an excellent role model who had become very strong. He resolved many issues he once had and he faced his fears.

AUDIENCE/RECOMMENDATION:

I think the best audience for this book would be middle school boys because I think it is appropriate for their age and reading level, they can relate to the characters, and they probably like books like these (filled with gore and monsters). Also the book has a slight immaturity to it, which I think is perfect because of the higher immaturity level in middle school boys.

RATING:

My rating for this book is a 2 out of 5 stars. I did not like it; it did not keep my interest, and I feel it is way below my reading level. The book was not that good, in my opinion, because it felt childish to me and too fiction based/not realistic enough. Some parts were dumb and should not have been included. Other parts did not fit with the storyline or were not relatable at all.

Genna says

Personal Response:

I gave this book a four out of five stars. This was a really good book and probably my favorite out of the series. It had a lot of twists in it that kept me reading. I really enjoyed this series and would read it again.

Plot:

Alex was a fugitive from the Furnace who killed the Warden. He was brought to a hospital/military base for testing after the Furnace breakout. He met a doctor named Panettiere who almost killed him with all the tests she did on him. When she made him face a berserker in a cage, Alex realized he could control what the berserkers did. This helped Alex start a war with Panettiere to get his friend, Zee, back from her. When he got Zee, Simon, and Lucy, they ran away to Alex’s old home. They stayed there for a night until Panettiere found them again. When they got away from her, they went to Furnace Island. There, Alex found out that he was Alfred Furnace’s new partner. He also found out that he never had the control that he thought he did. It was all Alfred in control, so Alex could live to replace him. Alex got “the shadow man” inside him and Alfred Furnace crumbled to death. Alex really liked being in control of everything until his friends talked him out of it. Alex had to send out a message for all of the creatures with nectar in their blood to kill themselves to stop the war. That meant Simon died as well. The new general came and took Alex, Zee, and Lucy to a remote location for them to recover to tell their stories. Alex’s blade arm was amputated, and they started to make him look like his old self again.

Characterization:

Alex was the main character in this series, and it was told from his point of view. Alex went through a lot of different mental stages throughout the book. He started with a lot of ambition to get to Alfred furnace to kill

him. His attitude helped him achieve his goal and stop the shadow man. He went from being his normal self, to being on a high when the shadow man was in him. Zee was a conserved and quiet kid that Alex met when he first got into the Furnace. Simon was a rat that became friends with Alex and Zee in the Furnace. Simon was willing to give up his life to help other people live when Alex needed to kill everyone that had nectar in their veins. Lucy was another important and new character. Lucy saved Alex after the shadow man got out of him by putting nectar back into him.

Setting:

The time period this book took place in was in modern times. This was shown when they used a motorized boat to get across a lake. Also, when there were battles weapons like bazookas were used. It's important that this book took place in modern times, because if it took place in older times there wouldn't be any guns or weapons. Without them, the Furnace system wouldn't have been exist in the first place. This book took place in England. The book mentioned the monsters spreading all the way to London.

Theme:

I think the theme of this book is sacrifice. Alex was willing to sacrifice his life to stop the war and so did Simon. Also, Lucy and Zee made the sacrifice to stick with Alex when he went to Furnace Island. Sacrificing themselves to go into such a dangerous situation with Alex helped them come up with the plan to have Alex send out the message to everyone with nectar to kill themselves.

Recommendation :

I would recommend this book to anyone above the age of 14. I think both girls and boys would find this book good, because it has a lot of different twists in it that keeps the reader's attention. I wouldn't recommend that any kid under the age of 14 should read this book, because it could scare them and it could be hard for them to understand.

Gus says

Personal Response

This book was amazing. I liked how much action was packed into the plot by the author. I also like the suspense that is on every single page. My favorite part is the last chapter because it lets me know that Alex finally gets closure. I usually do not like science-fiction books but this one was very good.

Plot

The book takes place in a war-torn England. After the release of the nectar, Furnace's creations have slaughtered millions of people across the country. The nectar is spread by Furnace's rats to children they come in contact with, causing the plague to increase. After a battle with Warden Cross, Alex emerges victorious and resembles nothing of his former self. The nectar has turned him into a deadly version of the Hulk. He has self healing abilities and he also has a blade for a left arm. When he is captured by the military, he is experimented on by Colonel Panitierre. Alex soon realizes that she is trying to find a way to use the nectar on her own forces, making them unstoppable. He also learns that they have captured his friends and they are trying to find out why Zee is immune to the nectar. Alex is able to break his friends and him out with the help of Furnace's forces. They believe that Alex is their new general after he has killed Warden Cross. Alex and company travel across the country with the military in hot pursuit in search of Alfred Furnace. Alex vows to kill Furnace for what he has done to Alex and the rest of England. Alex is able to see what brought Furnace to his current state because of the nectar and he feels sympathy for Furnace. When

they find Furnace, Alex is persuaded into taking Furnace's place as head of the nectar driven monsters he created. Alex accepts Furnace's offer and kills him to take his place. Alex is filled with Furnace's nectar and is able to control all of Furnace's troops as their new leader. Alex is able to fight off the nectar's insistence to kill and is able to end the war by telling all of Furnace's monsters to kill themselves. Panitierre finds Alex but is killed when she tries to control the nectar because it is only able to work in kids. Alex and his friends are rescued by the military and are given care while Alex tells them his story.

Characterization

Alex changes a frequent amount throughout the book. He soon learns to be brave in the face of overwhelming odds and becomes a leader to his friends around him. He also learns that in order to save the world, sacrifices must be made. Alex becomes very selfless with his choices because he cares more about his friends than himself. He becomes very solemn with the series of deaths of his friends and family but he uses each one as fuel to keep himself going. Towards the end of the book he becomes very understanding of what has happened and learns to embrace it as his life.

Setting

The setting is very important. The setting in war torn England adds excitement to even the most uneventful parts of the book. The author does a great job of describing the horrors that await a world that Alex once loved. It also adds suspense and keeps the reader on the edge of their seat. The setting has a feeling of gloom to it but Alex and his friends add an aspect of hope. The setting changes the characters a lot throughout the book, making the reader very interested toward what they will do next and what they will become.

Rating/Recommendation

This book is great for both genders. This book has a main character that is female so girls may like it more than the previous books. It is also good for people who like drama filled reading and a science-fiction aspect to the books they read. The transformations that occur to Alex due to the nectar is very scientific. The plot has suspense and drama woven throughout the entire book. The book is a great ending to this series. I think the book is good for anybody in middle school and up because it is very violent so it shouldn't be read by anybody younger. I gave this book five stars because even though it is the end of the series, I still want to read more about Alex and his exciting adventures.

Brittany says

This series is really too amazing. I probably cried a little too much reading this book. I won't reiterate what I have been saying about it in my reviews of the previous books. It's been a while since I've read a series as memorably impactful about human nature and the bonds that tie us together in life.

I felt like the story enabled me to empathize with the characters' journey. I could feel their pain, their desperation, their despair, and most of all, their growth. They were just children. But they weren't *just* children at the end.

I enjoy reading books on a large scale. It's hard for me to name one my favorite. number one. the best. Since there are so many books focusing individually on a variety of different topics: Friendship. Life. Humanity. Loneliness. I don't really know what category to put this series under.

All I can be sure of is that it was so bittersweet.

So awfully, *beautifully* bittersweet.

Aidan Hall says

This book was a very good book, and I would recommend it to anyone who likes thrilling adrenaline filled books! But in order to fully understand the book, reading the previous 4 books would help for you to fully understand this book. In this book, Alex, (the main character), searches to find Alfred Furnace but as Alex is trying he encounters the government who offers him help for his sewn together body, but the government turns on him and tries to kill him but Alex is saved by a blacksuit, (one of Furnace's guards), and Alex and his friends, the ones who are still alive, and they set out to find Alfred Furnace. Alex also learns that Alfred Furnace has control over anyone with the "New Nectar" and the "Old Nectar" inside their veins. Once Alex reaches the island where Alfred Furnace is, he finds the truth about why Alfred Furnace wanted Alex to come to the island, and Furnace has planned this all along. To read the rest of this book and find out the end, read this book, it ends with a twist you'll never see coming!

Josiah says

When the time comes to wrap up a story, Alexander Gordon Smith usually delivers. Every Escape from Furnace book, though the first three in particular, brings readers tantalizingly near the sweet freedom we crave ever since Alex Sawyer is framed for the murder of his best friend and sentenced to Furnace Penitentiary, stowed more than a mile underground where no inmate has a realistic chance of seeing daylight ever again. It's tense and claustrophobic, and many kids sent there crack under the pressure and opt for the permanent relief of suicide, but Alex, Zee, and the friends they make in prison refuse to give up. In defiance of reality a flicker of hope burns within, and this prods them to engineer an escape so improbable as to border on impossible. The daring young cohorts reach out to take their freedom time and again at the end of the first three books only to have it snatched away, but that pattern has changed by the fifth and final entry in the series, *Execution*. This is Alex's last opportunity to set the world right, to defeat the powers that run Furnace. Only a finish for the ages could do justice to this magnificent series, but Alexander Gordon Smith is the one in control, and I trust his writing instincts. We're about to find out Alex's fate.

Eliminating Warden Cross at the end of the previous book makes it clear to Alex that nothing but the death of Alfred Furnace, the man behind Furnace Penitentiary, can end the nightmare now facing the world. Furnace's monsters are everywhere, destroying homes and businesses, killing innocents by the thousand. The military bravely resists, but humans aren't strong enough to fight the nightmarish beasts of Alfred Furnace's twisted creation. When Alex is captured and brought to a government research facility, he encounters Colonel Alice Panettierre, who intends to experiment on Alex to learn how the nectar coursing through his veins changes humans. Panettierre's goals appear noble, but her experiments grow more and more demanding until Alex's life is in jeopardy. As Panettierre resorts to threatening Zee, Simon, and Lucy if Alex won't cooperate, Alfred Furnace's elephantine minions raid the facility and break Alex and his friends out. Suddenly Alex finds himself in control of Furnace's berserkers and blacksuits, his commands relayed to them telepathically. Panettierre won't relinquish her precious test subjects without a fight, but with Alfred Furnace on their side it's only a matter of time before Alex and company are on the lam again, headed toward the private island where Furnace lives in his gothic fortress. Alex is dead set on killing the founder of the prison where he suffered, but Furnace doesn't seem afraid, making it easy for the posse of fugitives to come to him.

"We are all puppets hanging over an ocean of madness...All it takes is one simple snip and we fall."

—*Execution*, P. 62

The island holds enigmas that Panettierre and the rest of the world wouldn't have a clue how to solve, but Alex has seen enough to know nothing is impossible. Panettierre doesn't even believe this could be the real Alfred Furnace, who would be hundreds of years old, but Alex knows it's him. Threats from within and without will test Alex on the island as never before, ripping at the weakened fabric of his conscience. Can he keep from plunging into a bottomless moral abyss, victim of his own appalling actions while under Furnace's influence? Can he stop himself from gorging on the power that Alfred Furnace offers and hurting more innocents himself, becoming as irredeemable as Furnace? The battle for Alex's freedom and the freedom of a world under siege by evil will come to an end one way or another in this book. It's up to Alex and his friends to write the story they want told about them.

"But I'm starting to understand that you don't have to be perfect to be good. You can do bad things and still be a good person."

—*Execution*, P. 309

The Escape from Furnace series is often about people being grossly misjudged, reviled for what society presumes them to be when they are not, in fact, guilty of the charges brought against them. Alex and Zee are the main examples, juveniles who dabbled in minor criminal mischief but are not murderers. Alfred Furnace's minions are kids, too, pumped full of nectar and forced to commit atrocities, and Alex understands this better than ever now that he is their temporary leader. When he sees one berserker languishing on the roadside after an attack by Panettierre's men, Alex is moved to help the pitiful creature, dying alone and unloved. "It's only a berserker", Simon points out, but Alex knows that isn't the whole story. "(I)t was more than that. It was a child. Torn open and patched back together too many times to be recognizable, yes, but it had once been like me, like all of us." We're all kids who have mutated and been torn and haphazardly sewn back together. We bear the scars, but that doesn't mean we don't deserve mercy. A child regarded only as a deplorable berserker needs the compassion of others more than ever. Figuring out what's true and what is cleverly disguised falsehood is a difficult game when people have been transformed as profoundly as Alfred Furnace has transformed his dark army, but only we ultimately control our own thoughts, and as long as we remember that, the game can be won. An old ally reminds Alex of this when he's on the verge of crossing a line that can never be uncrossed. Alex alone regulates how things work in his own head, his dearly departed friend says. "My head, my rules," Alex repeats to himself to stave off Alfred Furnace's manipulative tactical advances. Keeping that simple truth in mind is the way to win any mental game, even against the world's most despicable power master.

Execution emphasizes in no uncertain terms that Zee is the reason things have a chance of turning out okay in the story. Alex has other friends who come and go along the way, some who survive to the end and others who perish for the cause, but Zee is the bright spot in every midnight that Alex endures. His survival is by no means guaranteed—so many other bright spots are extinguished suddenly and brutally within Furnace Penitentiary—and the dread of something happening to Zee is ever-present in the series. Zee isn't just another kid; he's someone we can't bear to see die, and the other characters reflect our feelings for him. Panettierre zeroes in on Zee as a valuable test subject because of his immunity to the nectar, and her fixation on obtaining him puts Alex and the others at risk once they're on the run. How far would they go to protect their friend? "What if Zee was the key to discovering some kind of antidote to the nectar? What if killing him meant curing every other kid in the world? Would I seriously sacrifice the future of humankind just to save one kid—a kid I hadn't even known for that long, when it came down to it? Would I trade a billion lives for one? The answer was as inevitable as it was illogical: yes, of course I would. 'Yes, but it's Zee,' I said." That's the answer we wanted to hear, an affirmation that Zee is as important to the series as he is to us. As long as Zee hangs around, so does hope.

Lockdown (book one) is definitely the best Escape from Furnace novel, in my opinion, a work of brilliant

atmosphere that perfectly encapsulates the power of hope. *Death Sentence* (book three) is second best, followed closely by *Solitary* (book two), then *Execution* and then *Fugitives*, but all five are good. I'd rate *Execution* two and a half stars, but the margin between rounding up or down is thin, and I could have rounded up. The ending of *Execution* has its poignant moments that do right by the series, honoring some of my favorite characters (such as Ozzie) who died trying to break out of Furnace and confront its founder's evil agenda, but the greatest reward is the simple sweetness of Alex's liberty after society had written him off and threw him down the deepest, blackest well it could find. To experience freedom after Furnace is a miracle we shouldn't take lightly, and the narrative builds to it in a gratifying crescendo. This series is special, and I'm eternally grateful to Alexander Gordon Smith for it. I am stronger and better because of these books.

"Hope. It is the most important thing in the world. I believe that now more than ever. Hope is what saved my life, hope is what gave me the courage and the strength to carry on. Hope—that unshakeable, golden belief that things can get better—is why I'm here talking to you now. Without it, we are nothing."

—*Execution*, P. 311

Lucija says

A great conclusion to the series, even though I bawled during the whole thing.

SPOILER

"I pictured him scampering along the corridors beneath the prison, evading the blacksuits and the rats, staying alive. He'd never abandoned us. He had always come back. Not this time, though. We never saw Simon again."

Can I just die now? I loved their friendship and they had been through so much. This was just so heartbreaking for me.

SPOILER END

What was the best in these series were the characters. I connected with them deeply and I missed them all, even Sam the blacksuit. I cried (again) every time Donovan was Alex's anchor, keeping him from drifting off to madness. How he was his guardian angel, and it's so sad he had to die. Maybe if Alex hadn't killed him, he would remember his name and be with them now. *sobs* The idea is sick, but very original, and I loved every gruesome bit of it. Anyway, you can read the epilogue here:

www.alexandergordonsmith.com/epilogue...

All in all, a journey through hell and back with Alex, with tears but laughter as well. And I would join him any time again.

MATT ABHOLD says

"Execution" is the final book in the "Escape the Furnace" series. All of the books tie together very nicely and

make sense. They kept me interested, and not many books can do that. Alex is a very easy character to relate to in the sense that he has some problems with his life, but he tries to get over them.

The story started off in present day America, in a small town outskirting a city. It then moved its way down the Eastern Coast. After the coast, the group goes to a mansion on a small island. Finally, they go to an army base in the Rocky Mountains. The time affects the group because advances in technology make the journey for Alex and Zee much harder, as there are many setbacks.

By this time in the series, Alex was over 7 feet tall and much bigger than anybody else. He had a blade for one arm and three massive fingers on the other. They had found the army and promised that they were not dangerous. They explained everything that had happened to a woman named Panettierre, who wanted to study the nectar and how it worked. Alex and Simon agreed, until she starts to drain them until they are practically dead. They tested Alex by putting him in a pool with a berserker and a few other nectar infused creatures. Alex is drained, and the berserker can sense it. Usually, berserkers are on the opposite side, but here it realized to stay alive, it must work with Alex to try and escape. After the creatures started to attack Alex, the berserker kills them but takes a few blows along with it.

To make Alex stronger, he drank the berserkers nectar-infused blood. Alex went crazy. They ended up knocking him back out with tranquilizer. After that, they drained him again so he is powerless. Alex woke back up to doctors around him trying to study his body and why it reacts to the nectar. A huge explosion rocked the hospital and a Blacksuit came to Alex's aid and untied him. All of the doctors fled and Alex demanded to find Simon and Zee. The Blacksuit showed the way to Simon's cell, but told him also that they took Zee with him. Alex went mad, because throughout the whole thing, Zee was the person that reminded him who he was so he never turned into a complete monster, like the berserkers. Alex went on the hunt for Zee, and found out he was with Panettierre in a helicopter. Alex realized that he could control the berserkers so he sent one to bring the helicopter down to save Zee. After he saved Zee, Alex decided to finish his mission, so he had a berserker lead him to Alfred Furnace. On the way, Alex suggested they stop to rest, and one place he can remember going to was his house. Being there brought back many old memories and he gained more strength from it.

They left at the break of dawn and kept heading towards Furnace's Island. When they reached the island, one of Furnace's creatures lead them to the front door, where only Alex was allowed inside. While he was searching for Furnace, Panettierre and her army showed up and started to attack. Alex realized that the only way to stop all of the fighting was to kill Furnace once and for all. There was one catch; the only way to kill Furnace was to take the nectar in his blood. Alex did not hesitate, because he believed he could tame the beast that is in Furnace. After the fusion was complete, the remains of Furnace lay on the floor, and Alex commands the army that he took over to stop. He tells anybody with nectar in their veins to let themselves go easily. All the work that Furnace had put into building his army were demolished but for a better cause. Anyone with the nectar had taken their own lives in order to make others peaceful again.

After the fighting was over, Panettierre broke in to the mansion and demanded to be the commander of the already dead army. Alex explained to her that the only way to do that is to have a young enough body to handle the nectar, but she does not listen. The nectar that used to be Furnaces completely destroyed Panettierres' body. Two more soldiers come into the mansion and called their general in. He wanted to help Alex and Zee and apologized for all that the army had done to them. After being taken care of, Alex was asked to retell the whole story of how it all started. He has the blade on his arm removed and the army made him a prosthetic. The world was back to normal.

In this book, Alex shows he has a lot of heart and determination. He overcomes any obstacle in his way with the help of his friends. He had rough points in the book, but always got over them when he thought about who he truly was and what he was like before he was changed. He kept those he loved close and those he hated, he killed which is not the best thing to do, but it worked.

Zee is Alex's best friend that he met in the prison before they broke out. Zee was one of the masterminds behind it all, but he is very small and scrawny so nobody thought anything of him. Zee keeps Alex down to earth through it all and stays with him no matter what. Nothing seemed to frighten Zee except for losing his friends. Zee was the most fearless person which shows a lot about him because from his stature and outward personality, you would not realize it.

I recommend this book to anybody who can enjoy a book with a lot of plot twists and violence. I would give an age on this from 13 to 17 years old. I think mainly males would enjoy this book more, but females could too if they like science fiction books.

Julianne says

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1. When Alex made all his "children" die, if he could only control his "children" as a whole, and not make an exception for Simon, then why didn't Simon fight when he commanded the entire group to fight

Carie says

Maybe more of a 3.5. This is probably my least favorite book of the series--it really did get a bit over-the-top crazy at times, but I still thought it was a satisfying ending to the series. I liked the attempt to explain why Furnace was the way he was. I LOVED the friendships throughout this whole series and the shows of emotion from the characters. I also liked the pervasive theme of hope in each book (though a lot of faith, patience, and long-suffering are required of the reader in this series!) and that I was never able to predict what would happen next. There were a few things I didn't like (see SPOILERS below), but overall it's a solid ending. I really liked the epilogue on the Furnace website, too!! (The usual warning: still tons of violence and gore in this installment.)

****SPOILERS**:** There were entirely too many "near death" moments. And, overall, I thought things really went too far with Alex--very nearly beyond the point of no return and he seemed to continually have to make the same choice over and over again throughout the series. I guess the idea was "how low can you go--how far can you go--and still pull yourself back?", but it was really too much for me at times. I found it hard not to constantly despair at all that Alex had lost and that he could never have any semblance of normality in his future. The last 3 books of this series started to remind me of the "Uglies" series by Scott Westerfeld, but Furnace was better IMO because Alex never truly lost his core self--no matter what happened to his outside or any temporary insanity he underwent. I didn't even recognize Tally inside or out by the end of SPECIALS. Very, VERY sad about Simon. LOVE Zee!! LOVED when Alex went home!! Not sure about all the crazy draining of blood and that Alex's fate at the end was at all realistic, given everything that had happened physically, but it was a good and satisfying ending for me! Much better than I expected it would all turn out when I started this book! Yeah!!!
