



# The Thirteenth Skull

*Rick Yancey*

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## **The Thirteenth Skull** Rick Yancey

Alfred Kropp lost—then found—the legendary sword Excalibur. Then he defeated King Paimon, arguably the nastiest of demons ever to roam the earth. What could possibly be in store for him now? Plenty. Not only is a dangerous new enemy tracking Alfred's every move, even the people who have sworn to protect him no longer seem trustworthy. Who, or what, is "Sofia," and is there a connection between Sofia and the mysterious Thirteen Skull? The reluctant hero who has always narrowly avoided death may not be getting out of this adventure alive. Just right for fans of Alex Rider and Stephen King, this third installment in Rick Yancey's acclaimed series is a compulsive page turner readers won't soon forget.

## **The Thirteenth Skull Details**

Date : Published June 24th 2008 by Bloomsbury USA Childrens (first published June 2008)

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Author : Rick Yancey

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# From Reader Review The Thirteenth Skull for online ebook

## Meredith Reads says

While entertaining and easy reads, I am a bit frustrated with the editing of this series. In each book, there are errors that simply shouldn't be there. In this book, for example, a character's name is spelled Jourdain but is also written as Jordain. Sometimes the spelling alternates within the same paragraph.

Bloomsbury's editors should have caught these mistakes and it's disheartening when the mistakes are found throughout all three books.

Rick Yancy is clever and the premise of these books is quite delightful (if not a bit gory at times). I have already read The 5th Wave and will probably read other books he has written. I just hope the editing issues have been resolved.

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## Vanessa J. says

I have one reaction after finishing this series:

Honestly, I think Yancey should have left it at book 1. The sequels weren't necessary, and they didn't manage to hook me like book 1 did. Not to mention they aren't as funny or snarky as book 1 was, but oh well. That is not to say this book is bad, because as a standalone, you could say it's entertaining. The action never ends and there are still some hilarious comments. Compared to the charm of book 1, though, it falls short.

My final words I guess would be: Read The Extraordinary Adventures of Alfred Kropp but leave it there. I assure you will thoroughly enjoy book 1, so no worries. I must insist, though: Don't continue the series. It will only disappoint you (or maybe not) and make you lose interest in Yancey's other works, and we don't want that, do we? Not if you haven't tried the masterpiece that goes by the name of The Monstrumologist.

Anyway, my job here is done. Goodbye to another book series. Let's continue with the rest of my TBR.

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## Donalyn says

Imagine one long car chase, one drawn-out sword fight, one prison break-- every book in this series reads like one extended climax-- and that is why I love it.

Alfred's back, the OPIEP is still running the show, and there is another artifact that must be rescued.

Alfred Kropp, fifteen-year old loser and the last descendant of Lancelot, fights his destiny and the evil forces that would take over the world. The plots are not that complicated, but I don't read these books for the plots. It is Alfred and the incredible action sequences that make these books great. Think James Bond as teenage misfit and you get the idea.

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## **Cana Rensberger says**

Meeting Alfred Kropp in *THE EXTRAORDINARY ADVENTURES OF ALFRED KROPP* was extraordinary! Then I eagerly read *ALFRED KROPP THE SEAL OF SOLOMON*, wondering what could surpass the thrill of Alfred first stealing, then losing, and then recovering Excalibur, King Arthur's sword. The author, Rick Yancey, didn't let the reader down. Alfred was forced to fight demons! So, naturally, I couldn't wait to read *ALFRED KROPP THE THIRTEENTH SKULL*!

I've rated this book 6+, as I have his first two titles, but with a caveat. Mr. Yancey pulls no punches when describing the violence and clear danger Alfred faces. I do not doubt that younger readers will devour the Alfred Kropp books, but parents will want to use their discretion.

Mr. Yancey doesn't even let the reader get good and comfy in their favorite reading chair before relentlessly yanking them to the proverbial edge of their seat. The first chapter starts with a bang – literally. A truck blows up beneath Alfred's new penthouse suite window, on the 30th floor of Samson Towers. In short order one man is shot and Alfred is fighting for his life with his attacker. Soon the two are racing to the ground floor, one by express elevator, the other by parachute. And Mr. Yancey's not done yet. There's still a police car to commandeer, complete with the surprised officer at the wheel, a car chase through city streets, and yet another explosion.

Once again Alfred is sucked back into the OIPEP. But can he trust the new Operative Nine? What about the beautiful new field agent? And who is trying to kill Alfred, and more importantly, why?

First it was Excalibur, then the Seal of Solomon. Both times he nearly lost his life. Now it's the Thirteenth Skull. Alfred knows that this time it will be different. Samuel, the former Operative Nine and now Alfred's guardian, is not reassuring. Alfred must find out what the Thirteenth Skull is. The clock is ticking and Alfred knows his time is about up.

I absolutely will not tell you more. You **MUST, MUST, MUST** go buy *ALFRED KROPP THE THIRTEENTH SKULL*. But only after you buy and read his first two titles as this series is best read in order. Mr. Yancey has created a cast of characters equal to the Alex Rider series by Anthony Horowitz. I can't wait to see Alfred Kropp's adventures on the big screen!

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## **Jennifer Wardrip says**

Reviewed by Cana Rensberger for [TeensReadToo.com](http://TeensReadToo.com)

Meeting Alfred Kropp in *THE EXTRAORDINARY ADVENTURES OF ALFRED KROPP* really was extraordinary! Then I eagerly read *THE SEAL OF SOLOMON*, wondering what could surpass the thrill of Alfred first stealing, then losing, and then recovering Excalibur, King Arthur's sword. The author, Rick Yancey, didn't let the reader down. Alfred was forced to fight demons! So, naturally, I couldn't wait to read *THE THIRTEENTH SKULL*!

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## **M.A. Nichols says**

I both enjoyed and hated this book for many reasons. Some aspects made me want to give it a three-star rating. Others a one-star rating, so I compromised.

### **Reasons I Enjoyed It:**

1. It's a page turner. I found myself blasting through it trying to see what would happen next. I ended up sitting up 'til the wee hours in the morning to finish it. I guess that is the only reason I liked it. It was a page turner.

### **Reasons I Hated It:**

1. It was inconsistent with the rest of the series. Alfred Kropp is this accidental hero who doesn't really have major talents, but is able to prevail none-the-less. Suddenly, it's only a couple months later and he's turned into this super fighter who leaps from moving vehicles and can outsmart people much stronger and craftier than he has ever been.
2. Alfred keeps trusting these people who betray him and over and over. They have tried to kill him in both the other books, yet he still turns to them for help. He doesn't trust the people he loves and loves him, he trusts the Company who at best manipulates and uses him and at worst tries to kill him.
3. There really isn't a resolution in the book. While the title and the initial conflict may make you think it's about the crazy guy trying to kill Alfred because of something that happened in the first book, but it's really about him trying to escape the Company. And (SPOILER!) he doesn't. Sure, he survives, but he ends up

joining their ranks. That makes no sense and isn't a resolution. It tries to explain it away by making it sound like he would be able to undo their corruption, but throughout the story, they mention over and over that the Company's goodness or evil is completely at the whim of whoever's running it at the time. And that person can be at the whim of the Board. Frankly, it felt like a cop out. Rather than him finding a way to escape the Company, he joins up with them. Up to that point, the inconsistencies and his stupidity kept kicking me out of the story, but it was enough of a page turner that I kept with it. When that ending came along, I was irritated and felt robbed.

In the end, there are more reasons I hate it more than enjoyed it, but I gave it a 2-star because it did keep my attention so well during the bulk of the book. But I did walk away from it irritated. Both the second and third book reminded me a lot of the "Power of Five" or "Gatekeepers" series by Anthony Horowitz. It had a lot of the same feel and irritation.

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## **Wendy says**

In "The Thirteenth Skull" the fifteen year old hero's in danger again when he's not only hunted by a madman chasing a myth, a sociopath on a crusade to lobotomize him but held hostage by a new OP-Nine and the OIPEP Board who want to use his blood to create a formidable army of super soldiers. The plot is filled with betrayals, lies and treachery which are counterbalanced by a knightly heart, forgiveness and mercy.

In a fast-paced, action-packed plot with the adrenaline rush of high-speed chases and helicopter explosions Alfred Kropp not only has to unravel the mystery of the thirteenth skull, but unearth its connection to project "Sophia". The intensity and suspense quickly heats up when Alfred makes a deal for his safety and freedom in exchange for Solomon's ring only to be betrayed; his blood too valuable a commodity to be allowed to disappear. Lies, disloyalty and disillusionment permeate the atmosphere of this well-written thrill-ride as Alfred quickly learns he can't trust anyone, not his guardian, his extraction coordinator Ashley or even his esteemed lawyer Alphonso Needlemeir.

Intriguing characters with their passion and complex personalities infuse this adventure with energy, excitement and drama. Alfred Kropp's knightly traits continue to be shaped by every challenge he faces, growing from a awkward, insecure teen into a resourceful, clever and honourable hero. In this plotline Samuel St. John (formerly Op-Nine) haunted by a guilty conscience has assumed legal guardianship but is still secretive, his loyalty split between his oath to the OIPEP and desire to protect Alfred while Abigail Smith, the Director of the OIPEP is just, trustworthy and compassionate.

Yet it's the antagonists that ignite the pages of this story with their ruthlessness and inhumanity; like the arrogant, infamous genetic engineer Dr. Mingus; the brutish Vosch; the cold and calculating Jourdain Garmot; and the merciless, cold-hearted new OP-Nine, Nueve.

The third installment in the Alfred Kropp series is intoxicating entertainment that keeps you holding your breath until the end. I loved "The Thirteenth Skull" and hope this isn't the last of Alfred Kropp's adventures.

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## **Cindy says**

After saving the world from complete destruction twice, you'd think Alfred could get a chance to sit back and relax for a bit. Nope. This book takes up just minutes after *The Seal of Solomon* ends, and it's back into the fray for Alfred.

If you haven't heard of this series (and it seems to be a well kept secret), you are missing out. Alfred is an unlikely hero. He's a pretty normal guy. But he finds himself over and over again in extraordinary situations.

I don't want to say too much here, in case you haven't read the first two, but I will say that several characters are back. The most frightening this time around, though, is Special Operative Nueve, a complete psychopath who is either Alfred's only hope or his worst nightmare.

I love this series! Alfred is such a great character. I think what makes him so appealing is that he has absolute certainty that he really is no one special. But he's the only one who can do what he does. He makes the right choice, again and again, even if that is a tough choice for himself. He never fails. That's what I love about him.

Highly recommended. This is a violent series, with lots of religious references, but it would be great for most teens. Plenty of action, no real language, and a great hero.

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## **Ginger says**

Better than the second -- more natural-feeling conflict -- but the stunts he survives are getting more and more over-the-top. I like death-defying action as much as anybody, but I don't think it meshes as well with an antihero like Alfred as it does with a caricature like James Bond.

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## **Ji Mei says**

This book was a satisfactory ending to the Alfred Kropp series. This one picks up after the first one by just a few days, maybe a couple weeks, and starts off with a bang. Literally. From there, it's all action and poor Alfred being shipped around by OIPEP agents or forced to travel because of OIPEP agents. I felt like this one wasn't as magnificent as the second book, though it still with a good read. Alfred has changed into a really intelligent and confident character who has flaws that he constantly tries to overcome. I'm glad that Ashley, Sam, and Abigail come back in this one and you see more of Alfred's vulnerable side. I like how the author brings back the hurt and pain that Alfred feels from losing those close to him, but he doesn't make the character choke up with it. In fact, he uses it to show how much Alfred has grown up from the first book. The only problems that I found, which are quite minor, was that Natalia never showed up again and that this one seemed to skip around a lot. Maybe it's because I don't feel closure with Natalia, like some kind of letter that says "Hey, I'm doing all right. Found nice people, friends, and hope you have a good life, Alfred". Something to just tell me what happened with her. And this one did feel like Alfred was here, then there, then suddenly somewhere else, but maybe it's because I read it so fast with all the action going on? I don't know. I forgot to mention this in my other review, but it appeared in this one as well when it gives you some website pages. Though it's a minor detail, it was a great reminder about secret organizations and it helps set up what might happen later on in the book. Oh, and the countdown was genius! I really thought that was so clever. In the end, it came back into a full, complete circle and overall, I felt like it was just a really good series. I wish there were more! But I'm sure it's not to be since this last book came out five years ago.

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## **Kathy says**

The Thirteenth Skull is fun and fast moving but lacks the nuances of the first two Alfred Kropp novels. Our hero is now older and far more competent - and he is harder. I didn't like this book nearly as much as the first two but it is still a decent read and older teens will love it.

Please see my full review here: <http://www.morebooksthantime.com/alfr...>

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## **Adalie says**

So Alfred gets one more unplanned adventure. Alfred has a very special gift inside him. Everyone wants this gift, they want what he has. They want the Seal and Excalibur. All these important artifacts and more secrets. They literally want to extract the secrets of Alfred.

\*why do authors write about peeing? I know everyone does. Even fictional people have to pee.

They just jump all over locations. So there isn't a sense of one location. I feel like pacing is in the middle of fast and slow. Alfred's actions are believable because he just wants to do the right thing. He never asked to be sucked in. He didn't even know he had a destiny. The dialogue feels too much back and forth to me. Most dialogues feel like actual talking.

I thought there was another item to discover but there wasn't. I've already read most of Rick Yancey's books so I know what his writing is like. The ending makes me feel like there could be more to the series.

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## **Aelvana says**

Alfred Kropp is rather tired of living an exciting life. After finding (and losing) Excalibur and defeating a horde of demons, he was hoping life would quiet down a little. After an assassination attempt leaves him on the wrong end of the law, he knows he's ready to be done with being special. So in an attempt to prove he has the free will to choose his fate, he decides to quit. Retire. Spend the rest of his life somewhere nice and quiet. The only problem is that he has no idea what he really signed up for . . .

The action never flags in this book as Alfred Kropp discovers more than a few new mysteries about the universe, including a few secrets about himself. On the run from just about everything, constantly under the threat of death, he's figuring out a lot of things just to survive. And his upside-down logic is always a treat, particularly when he proves his pure heart despite everything that's happened to him. He takes the lesson about his blood being a gift and not a treasure to wonderful extremes.

Unfortunately, this book lags behind both the first and second in the series. Sure, there are more explosions, but one of the best things about the other two books was that Alfred had a chance to pause in the middle of the chaos and reflect on things. Since this book doesn't go that deeply into his mind, it makes the scene about forgiveness at the end far less meaningful; it feels like a last-minute thing Alfred threw on there. On a slightly more pedantic note, Alfred's blood would have to have some benefit to himself to let him do all that



he did on top of the injuries he collected.

On a more personal note, the book seemed a bit inconsistent with clarifying whether or not there is some overriding "right" or "good" and not just the best choice a person thought he or she could make in the situation. The last few pages lean towards the right trumping a person's own idea of what's most important, but the rest of the book more supports the idea that everyone decides based on what they think the best thing to do is, so there shouldn't be any blame attached to that. I would've preferred Alfred to cling to good rather than necessity; he does seem to be going there by the end, so I'll look forward to seeing what he does in the next book. Additionally, although the body count stacks up almost as high as the first two books, Alfred is reacting a lot less to the deaths. It's hard to tell if he's getting numb to grief or if he honestly doesn't care (as long as they're trying to kill him, that is).

Overall it's still worth a read, though given what a powerhouse Seal of Solomon was as a followup, The Thirteenth Skull disappointed me a bit. Alfred is still a fun character to follow if only for his unpredictable schemes and nearly magical bad luck. I rate this book Recommended.

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## **Joshua says**

The Thirteenth Skull is a stupendous action novel when considered on its own, but when considered as part of the overall series of the Alfred Kropp novels, it has some glaring flaws. On the one hand, this is a very interesting tale which mixes musings on morality, necessity, and the nature of reality with nail-biting car chases and gunfights. On the other hand, it marks a very abrupt shift in the nature of the series, and seems to have an entirely different hero than in the previous books, despite being the same person.

For those of you who have not read the earlier books, a misadventure involving Excalibur left Alfred with blood that possesses an ability to heal even the most grievous injuries – although not his own. It also left him with some deadly enemies, seeking revenge for their defeat in the first book, who launch an attack on Alfred in the first pages of the novel astounding in its scope.

Alfred seeks shelter with the mysterious intelligence agency known as OIPEP, but as he spends time with them and their vile leading operative known as Nueve, the more it becomes clear that their intentions are hardly benign. Although Alfred trusts OIPEP's leader implicitly, he decides to strike out on his own in order to try to defeat the enemies that besiege him. But doing so won't be easy, especially with treachery lurking behind every corner.

This is a complex novel considering how short it is. Alfred discusses frequently "the thing that must be done," the necessary actions needed to maintain our freedom and security, and how they so rarely intersect with doing the right thing. He also seems to get involved in gunfights rather alarmingly frequently, including an incredible car chase in Billings, Montana of all places. But the ease at which Alfred becomes accustomed to his life of intrigue becomes a problem with this book.

Umberto Eco stated once that "the real hero is always a hero by mistake; he dreams of being an honest coward like everyone else," and this pretty much describes Alfred until this book. The Alfred of last book – which just happened days prior – would never have, for example, engaged an armed assassin in single combat and pursued him by hijacking a police car, which he does just a few pages into the novel. He seems uncomfortably comfortable with violence and in other words, more assured.

In all likelihood, I'm being overly picky. The Thirteenth Skull is best enjoyed as a standalone. Read this book first. Read the others second. And then pretend those novels happened to someone else.

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### **John Hively says**

This book is a typical Kropp book. It's filled with a lot of chase scenes and more chase scenes followed by chase scenes. On the other hand, you can see Alfred grow, as well as other characters. The plot wasn't that hot, but it wasn't that bad. It was well written.

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