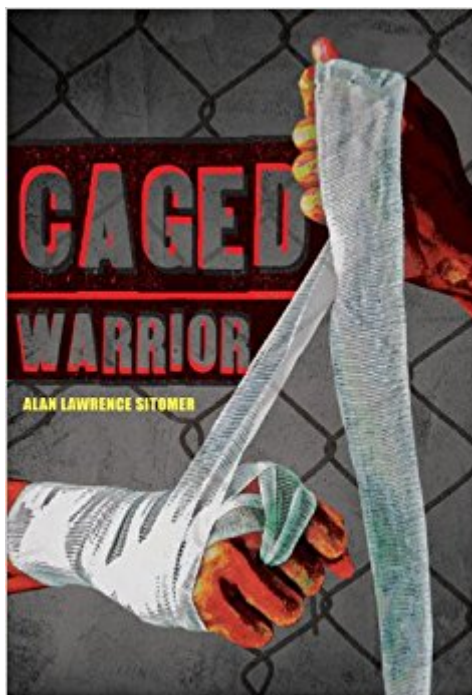


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# Caged Warrior



## Synopsis

McCutcheon Daniels' life is full of bone-cracking violence. As a star fighter in the gritty underground Mixed Martial Arts circuit in the poorest section of Detroit, McCutcheon fights under the tutelage of his volatile and violent father, not so much for himself but to survive as protector of his beloved five-year old sister, Gemma. We get to know McCutcheon as he battles opponents who are literally trying to kill him. Mr. Freedman, his science teacher, spots his intellectual potential, befriends him, and encourages him to enter the lottery for a scholarship to an elite charter school so he can obtain a first-class education. He is at first dead-set against the idea, and of course his tyrannical father forbids it. But the school's headmaster, Kaitlyn, a student assigned to be his guide, and Mr. Freedman continue to encourage him to consider it. His father and the Priests, the local Mafia-like crew that run Detroit's organized crime, have other plans for McCutcheon. For them, he is simply a tool to make them money. And when that cash flow is threatened, his father hits McCutcheon where it hurts most-he hides Gemma and threatens his own son that he'll never see his beloved sister again if he doesn't play by the Priests' rules. For the first time in his life, McCutcheon reaches out for help. Mr. Freedman turns out to have a very mysterious past and not only helps McCutcheon find his sister but also his mother who had simply disappeared on McCutcheon's 13th birthday. All seems well, but happy endings aren't really something McCutcheon feels he can rely on. And he may be right. A ferocious novel, *Caged Warrior* is like a great fight movie, a tour-de-force of relentless conflict, but one that is leavened with rich characters and meaningful and loving relationships.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Gr 9 Up— In run-down Detroit, 16-year-old McCutcheon Daniels's mother has left, and his druggie, lowlife father is training him to be a champion in a mixed martial arts ring—sometimes dubbed human cock fighting. When McCutcheon describes a fighter who is "carried out of the coop with a pool of blood flowing— one eyeball dangling from an empty, hollow socket attached by a few thin shreds of meaty string," that term fits, and more cringe-worthy scenes abound. The teen is forced to compete in these bloody and dangerous matches for the Mafialike Priests, where life and limb are at risk as his father racks up thousands in gambling dollars. McCutcheon gets a pittance in return that he uses to lovingly care for his five-year-old sister, Gemma, in a shabby apartment. Despite all his challenges, the protagonist is likable and tries to be a good guy, and when his science teacher gets him into a competitive, highly academic charter school, he knows he is at a crossroads. However, his evil father and the Priests refuse to let go of their star. This fast-paced, engrossing, and intense story balances repulsive behavior, profane language, and even child prostitution with gentler moments where McCutcheon cares for Gemma and is attracted to a nice girl out of his league. Several truths are revealed toward the drop-off ending as McCutcheon enters a witness protection program, leaving the option for a sequel. Mature readers of the similarly tough, disturbing, and well-written *Tap Out* by Eric Devine (Running Pr., 2012) will be drawn to this book as well.—Diane P. Tuccillo, Poudre River Public Library District, CO

On the mean streets of Detroit, McCutcheon Daniels— aka Bam Bam— has a mean rep in the underground sport of mixed martial arts. Trained by his father, McCutcheon has been preened to be a fighter with killa instinct whose no-holds-barred battles are his family's sole source of income. Out of the cage, this weekend warrior is a tenth-grader and loving brother who does everything he can to keep his little sister safe and provided for. When a teacher takes a special interest in McCutcheon, offering him a future that isn't determined by his fists, he is given a choice for the first time in his life, but it's one that might incur the wrath of his father as well as the men running the fight circuit. Sitomer pulls no punches in this novel where fights and life alike are merciless and characterized by grit, blood, endurance, and smarts. Yet amid the violence, McCutcheon's inner strength shines, guaranteeing readers will back him through the book's harsh twists and turns. Grades 9-12. --Julia Smith

McCutcherson's life is characterized by grit, blood, determination, and endurance. He lives in inner city Detroit with his volatile father who trains him to be an underground Mixed Martial Arts fighter. He fights for prize money to pay his father's debts to the Priests, a local gang. After his mother left the family two years prior under questionable circumstances, his only source of happiness is his five-year-old sister Gemma, who he protects and provides for. When a teacher takes a special interest in McCutcherson and he is offered a place at an elite charter school, he is conflicted between his desire to leave the brutal world of cage fighting behind and incurring the wrath of his father and the gangsters running the fighting circuit. His optimistic hope for a better life is contrasted sharply with the reality of his downtrodden, poverty-struck life with his alcoholic, abusive father. His father is an incredibly cruel and sadistic character who uses his young daughter to bend his son to his will. McCutcherson is a likeable character with inner strength, and his narration gives readers a feeling for his fear and pain. The novel explores his difficult decision to make a change that requires stepping into the unknown. The pacing is brisk. There are multiple detailed fight sequences, but they are not gratuitous. This is an intense novel that should appeal to reluctant teen readers.

McCutcherson has been groomed since a very young age to be a prize winning fighter (something his father wasn't able to accomplish) by a very controlling, evil, and selfish father. The one person McD would do anything for is his little sister, Gemma. Life doesn't get much worse. Sitomer has crafted a disturbing, totally believable story about a young kid, who despite the odds, is able to hope for a better life for his little sister and himself, reach out for help, and try for a better life that includes an education and a family that includes love. Gritty Detroit could also be Philadelphia, Los Angeles or any city in America. Teens will not be able to put this honest, thought provoking book down!

Caged warrior written by Alan Lawrence Sitomer is a book about the hard life of an underground cage fighter, in the streets of Detroit. You follow a warrior through his hardships and fights, though his perspective. McCutcherson Daniels AKA Bam Bam has many ups and downs to his life. One of the up sides is his science teacher convinces him he should join the school lottery to have a chance to win and go to a first class charter school, and he won but him and his dad are dead set on the idea that he will not be attending a private school even with the great opportunity and first class education. The school threw everything at him including pretty girls to school tours to convince him it

was the right move. However he did not bite the idea, just like the priest and his dad wanted because all they want is for Bam Bam to make them money. Following all the ruckus with the school Bam Bam goes into the biggest and nastiest fight of his life. Bam Bam battles with his strength but not only do you have to have strength you have to have a good mental game and he shows that when he was coming against his biggest and dirtiest opponent. He had one shot to put him down and he drew him in and turned his thumb the opposite way it should be facing, to win the fight. He draws the opponent in and swatchÃfÃ¢Ã â -Ã â„¸s the opportunity. Follow Bam Bam as he battles the best around and the worst just trying to make a living. This book, written for more matures audiences is a nonfiction book so it was actually somebodyÃfÃ¢Ã â -Ã â„¸s life at one time, making the book even more interesting and exciting. Given the many other books Alan Lawrence Sitomer has written such as The Hoopster he has very good knowledge about the topic of the ÃfÃ¢Ã â -Ã Å“under worldÃfÃ¢Ã â -Ã Å• or the nasty streets of Detroit.

I hate reading books but honestly this book made me enjoy reading!!! Now I'm reading the 2nd part "Noble Warrior" and it's great!!! For people that hate reading this book is the perfect book to learn to enjoy books on your hand... It has some mild language, funny moments in a serious way, it has some deep thoughts through the book about a tough MMA fighter in his teens!

Very good story and well written. I enjoyed the cage fighting scenes and the duplicity of the main charterer's hours and dreams.

This is a very dark and often violent book, certainly not for the squeamish, but a riventing story.

great book

good

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