



## Victor LaValle's Destroyer

*Victor LaValle , Dietrich Smith (Illustrations)*

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The legacy of Frankenstein's monster collides with the sociopolitical tensions of the present-day United States.

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein beseeched his creator for love and companionship, but in 2017, the monster has long discarded any notions of peace or inclusion. He has become the Destroyer, his only goal to eliminate the scourge of humanity from the planet. In this goal, he initially finds a willing partner in Dr. Baker, a descendant of the Frankenstein family who has lost her teenage son after an encounter with the police. While two scientists, Percy and Byron, initially believe they're brought to protect Dr. Baker from the monster, they soon realize they may have to protect the world from the monster *and* Dr. Baker's wrath.

Written by lauded novelist Victor LaValle (*The Devil In Silver*, *The Ballad of Black Tom*), *Destroyer* is a harrowing tale exploring the legacies of love, loss, and vengeance placed firmly in the tense atmosphere and current events of the modern-day United States.

## Victor LaValle's Destroyer Details

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Author : Victor LaValle , Dietrich Smith (Illustrations)

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Comics

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## From Reader Review Victor LaValle's Destroyer for online ebook

### Rebecca says

This is the first book I finished for the #POCathon which started today (12th August), for anyone interested in finding out more I've linked a couple of the hosts announcement videos below

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XoHIo...>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s9-y7...>

Anyway- As far as this book goes, I thought it was pretty good, but the way it was told was quite confusing and I don't think I really got a lot of it- there were some things that I guess I assumed would be explained more as the book went on but they weren't really, unless I missed it. I love graphic novels but I find that happens a lot in them because they're so short. This feels like a standalone, I can't imagine there being another volume so I don't think the questions I have will be resolved. Maybe if I read it again I'd work things out.

The concept of this book is really good, the idea of meshing topics like racism, police brutality, grief etc. with the original Frankenstein story is really good. I definitely preferred this to the original Frankenstein but then I didn't like writing style of the original so that's not surprising.

Even though I had issues with it, I would still recommend people read this if they're interested in the concept, it is a bit gory at time so if that bothers you you might not like it, but otherwise, it's definitely worth checking out.

In terms of #POCathon challenges this fulfils-

1. Read books with main characters from three different races, ethnicities etc (1/3 completed)
  3. Read an SFF book by or featuring people of colour
  6. Read a book that deals with racism, prejudice or immigration
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### Dan says

Review - <https://youtu.be/ILWreWc3xVY>

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### ElphaReads says

Victor LaValle once again proves that he's one of the best out there when it comes to bringing social justice metaphors into horror. DESTROYER is an update to the FRANKENSTEIN story, but it incorporates relevant and emotional themes such as racism, misogyny, police brutality, and a mother's love to the original tale. The little references to other aspects of the original novel and Mary Shelley's life were also really fun to spot. Another great new take on the classic science fiction tome during the anniversary of its original publication, DESTROYER hit me right in the gut and I am going to get it for my personal comics collection.

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### **John says**

Society is the monster.

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### **Devann says**

I would have ultimately loved for this series to be a little bit longer but it's very good and the ending gives a good amount of closure. This story is yet another great example of what LaValle is so good at - taking classic SF elements and merging them with current social issues and the art is absolutely gorgeous. I hope he does more comics in the future.

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### **Matt Hickey says**

I've never read LaValle's fiction before but this book blew me away. It's a sequel to Mary Shelley's Frankenstein and a meditation on the epidemic of police violence against blacks in America. The characters are lovingly rendered and the plot movements thought provoking. He clearly has a lot of affection for Shelley's original story and achieves a continuation that matches the weight and style of her writing. In some ways I was reminded of Alan Moore's early "League of Extraordinary Gentleman" stories, but with a narrower frame and sharper focus.

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### **Diz says**

This is an interesting take on the Frankenstein story. In a world in which Frankenstein's monster is a historical reality, a black mother uses super science to revive her son who was killed by a police officer. The story could have been stronger if it focused more on the emotional connection between the mother and son, and less on the agency pursuing immortality that the mother used to work for. All of the agency stuff was quite boring. The story picks up though when it focuses on social commentary.

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### **Chad says**

This was decent but could have been great if it had been given more issues to flesh out the story more. A lot of the elements in the synopsis didn't come across in the story at all. Dietrich Smith's art was detailed and clean. I quite liked it. LaValle did do a good job of taking a classic story and merging it with modern social issues.

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### **Nicholas Kaufmann says**

In just six issues, LaValle tells a captivating, unexpectedly emotional, self-contained story that mixes literature, science fiction, and the kind of family tragedy that's all too real. (Also, you get to see Frankenstein's monster battle a huge, heavily armed robot, which is pretty cool!) Occasionally, I wished the

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story were longer, even if only by one issue, because there are so many great plot threads that I would have loved to see explored further, including the monster's own experiences and an intriguing bit about cloning that definitely could have developed into something more. What dwells at the heart of the story, though, isn't the monster's murderous rage at all life, but a mother's righteous anger at the untimely, unnecessary, and unpunished death of her son. The series may be called DESTROYER, but LaValle's message is about how important every life is, how full of promise and potential, and what a catastrophe it is for all of us when a life is cut short and that potential is never realized.

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### **Michael Hicks says**

Lots of great ideas marred by a serious lack of development and depth, and a much too-rushed ending in an already too quick book. Not sure if I'm going to do a larger review of this one or not...I'd been looking forward to reading Destroyer and was pretty let down. Bummer.

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### **David Goldman says**

This graphic novel is an excellent short series. The graphic novel does the impossible, gives us a fresh and relevant take on the Frankenstein myth. In an age where the machines we created feel like they are taking their revenge, this series makes you feel pulled between the creator and created (It's hard to sympathize with the mother, but you do). , those needing revenge and the revenged, hope and naiveté (the young monster). The novel wraps these standard Frankenstein themes with those of black anger and discrimination. The story, while heady, is a total page turner and I finished in two sittings, which I rarely do. I do wish it were longer as the conclusion felt rushed and more than a little didactic. But overall, highly recommended.

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### **Douglass Gaking says**

This is the best comic/graphic novel that I have read in quite awhile. While the length is a bit short, and it could have been more fully developed, the story is very well-constructed, offers layers of content to think about, and is peppered with all sorts of wonderful easter eggs. The allusions to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*—and even to Percy Shelley—show deference to the original. This is really an extension of the original story. Shelley's novel opened the door to all these ethical discussions that we still have today. This book adds to the conversation and imagination, but is never in danger of overreaching. The science fiction is brilliant, and the book uses today's most important issues to shape the characters and their intentions. In a way, every character in the story is their own Frankenstein, and—as one Goodreads reviewer already pointed out—"society is the monster."

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### **Rachel says**

A six-issue series that should have been at least twelve. DESTROYER asks what might happen if Dr. Frankenstein really had successfully created his monster and a brilliant scientist attempts to copy him in the 21st century. Worthy of note are the nice and tight illustration and mention of current social issues in the dialogue. Without spoiling it, I love how the bride of Frankenstein was payed homage to, as well! The problem here, like with most short comics, is that there just wasn't quite enough space available for character

development, so I didn't really find myself caring a whole lot about these people. LaValle did do better than most with just 160 pages, though.

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## Miriam says

This Frankenstein-inspired story has solid art and a ton of great ideas and characters. Like my previous LaValle read, *Ballad of Black Tom*, I felt that it suffered by dint of its short length, which simply did not allow enough space for the developments that were needed. However, it is only the first book in the series so I'm hopeful that these developments will occur. I did enjoy this (I use the star ratings in the goodreads-designated sense, meaning 3 = I liked it) and look forward to both continuing this story and getting the chance to eventually read one of LaValle's longer works, such as *Changeling*.

Here is a list of recommendations from the back of the book, only the first of which have I read myself.

Irredeemable, Vol. 1

Wild's End #1

Strange Fruit #1

The Spire #1

The Woods, Vol. 1: The Arrow

Hexed: The Harlot & The Thief Vol. 1 (Hexed)

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## The Library Ladies says

(originally reviewed at [thelibraryladies.com](http://thelibraryladies.com) )

Victor LaValle is an author whom I greatly enjoy, as I don't think I've read one thing by him that underwhelmed me. I really liked his mental institution horror story "The Devil In Silver", I found "The Ballad of Black Tom" to be a fun deconstruction of a racist Lovecraft tale, and I REALLY liked "The Changeling" and how it made a modern day dark fairy tale out of New York City. So when my friend Tami told me that he had written a graphic novel that decided to take on "Frankenstein", I absolutely had to read it. It was a long wait at the library, but when "Destroyer" finally came in I sat down and devoured it in one setting. Even if it ran me through the wringer and then some. I guess I never thought about how "Frankenstein" could be combined with present day socio-political themes, and yet LaValle meshed them so well that I was blown away.

The Monster has emerged from the Arctic in modern times, and his former longing of being included and understood has been thrown out the window. He is a beast that is intent on destruction of the human race, as he believes that it has wronged him, as well as everything else around it, and does not deserve to go on. In contrast, we meet a modern day descendent of Victor Frankenstein. Her name is Dr. Baker, and she, too, has her heart set on destroying the society that she has continuously wronged her. For her, though, that is mostly because she lost her son Akai after a witness mistook his little league bat for a gun, and police killed him. Her science experiment has brought Akai back from the dead, though her scientific genius has made him a wonder of modern technology as well as an undead twelve year old. It's the perfect metaphor for the rage and despair that parents like her have felt over and over again, and her urge to destroy every part of the racist society that destroyed her life. Her rage and plotting is utterly terrifying, but damn does it make sense. I loved Dr. Baker, as you get to see her life before Akai's death through flashbacks, including her time at a top scientific research organization (that basically fired her when she got pregnant, because heaven forbid a woman in a STEM profession want to start a family). That organization has also stolen her ideas and

technology and intends to use it against her, which is another indictment of power structures stealing ideas from groups that it wrongs. LaValle does a very good job of showing how she could go from a bright eyed and enthusiastic young scientist to a revenge intent victim, and while I don't think he ever makes it seem like her urge to kill everyone in society is correct, he makes you really understand why she'd feel that way.

Dr. Baker a great juxtaposition to The Monster, who has also decided to take a path of destruction because of his grievances. It takes those themes of science gone too far and what makes a monster and applies them to a T. Hell, the other little homages are also on point, like the names of the agents Percy and Byron, named for the two men to whom Mary Shelley first shared her vision of a Modern Prometheus. The Easter eggs are plentiful, and I had a hell of a time finding them. It's a really fun thought exercise about what The Monster would possibly be like today if it finally left the Arctic, and boy is it bleak. I don't know if I really like the idea of The Monster being reduced to, well, a monstrous/brainless being, because far too often has Shelley's vision been misinterpreted from the thinking, and therefore plagued, creature of her intention. But in this case, I think that LaValle does it in a way that would be a potential foregone conclusion, and it does add to the symbolism all the more.

I really enjoyed the art work that Dietrich Smith brought to this story. It felt sufficiently comic book, but it also had bits of depth and darkness and shadow that conveyed various points of tragedy and sadness. I also liked the more abstract design of the cover (done by Micaela Dawn), though the drawing style inside was the design that I preferred. The details from the gore and the violence to the varied facial expressions are very well done.

"Destroyer" is a superb reinterpretation of a classic story of horror and tragedy, and LaValle has once again shown his talent and retelling stories with a socially conscious lens that reflects today's ills. It's another update of "Frankenstein" that I think Mary Shelley would appreciate.

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