



★ **Monster**

Enki Bilal

Titan Comics (Sep 17, 2019)

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Titan Comics presents a masterwork from longtime comics creator Enki Bilal—a collected edition of his four-part graphic novel *Monster*.

Nike Hatzfeld is an orphan of the 1990s Balkan War with a flawless memory. He remembers his earliest days, including the two other infants alongside him in the bombed-out hospital. As an adult, he feels compelled to reunite and protect them. As he's drawn into the complex web of a secret organization and an artist working on the world stage, the three find themselves fighting to survive.

Replicated, sometimes near-perfect copies of individuals populate the story, giving it a sense of futuristic paranoia reminiscent of the work of Philip K. Dick. Its wide scope extends to outer space and Mars. *Monster* explodes with original and creative ideas, including an evil genius named Optus Warhole who stages an installation that uses the blood of victims to paint on an all-white canvas and creates an anti-war cloud of “compressed death” that rains tears “drawn from the decomposition of two million dead soldiers and civilians.”

Bilal's artwork is exquisite, rendering a fully realized fictional world with its own quirks, colors, and news headlines, the latter featured throughout as hints of the zeitgeist. Minor details, including miniaturized giraffes kept as pets, further enhance the immersive otherness of *Monster*. Bilal's writing is the glue that holds it all together. He entertains while meditating, through his characters, on art, war, religion, relationships, and shared memories and consciousness. A sure bet for science fiction fans, *Monster* is not to be missed.

PETER DABBENE (July/August 2019)

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