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# This Monstrous Thing

Kiersten Carr

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# Book Review

**Title:** This Monstrous Thing  
**Author:** Mackenzie Lee  
**Reviewer:** Kiersten Carr  
**Publisher:** Katherine Tegen Books  
**Publication Year:** 2015  
**ISBN:** 9780062382771  
**Number of Pages:** 371  
**Interest Level:** Young Adult  
**Rating:** Outstanding



## Review

Alasdair Finch is a Shadow Boy, an illegal mechanic who works on people with clockwork prosthetics when the rest of society shuns them. He and his family move from place to place, keeping their business a secret and hiding from law enforcement, but Alasdair has a secret even beyond his family's: he has brought his older brother, Oliver, back from the dead using clockwork. Horrified by the changes Oliver has undergone as part of this process, Alasdair cares for him in secret. Then comes the publication of the novel *Frankenstein*, and the city cracks down on clockworks and Shadow Boys in an attempt to find the inspiration for Doctor Frankenstein and his monster. When his father is arrested, Alasdair must flee the city to seek refuge with his idol Doctor Geisler. The scientist promises Alasdair that if he shows him how he reanimated Oliver, he will bring them to his university and protect them both, but Alasdair finds evidence that that protection will come at a high price for Oliver. With limited options, he returns to Geneva, only to have Oliver become the leader of a clockwork rebellion. Given 24 hours to give up his brother to the police, Alasdair faces angry rebels, Doctor Geisler's terrifying automatons, and Oliver's own unpredictability in order to help his brother see that he is not a monster.

*This Monstrous Thing* is a richly creative re-imagining of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in an industrial, steam-punk society. Mackenzie Lee tells her version with complex, compelling characters that behave like real people- neither perfect nor wholly monstrous- who cultivate sympathy and interest. The themes of love, forgiveness, betrayal and deception are woven together against a backdrop of social unrest and fear, revealing a story told with pitch-perfect clarity and enough twists and turns to keep the reader guessing about how everything will be resolved. The inclusion of Mary Shelley as a character in her own right is particularly intriguing and well thought out, making the book a must-read for fans of her novel *Frankenstein* as well as for those who love a good story with strong characters.

\*Contains some brief gore at several points, and implied homosexuality.