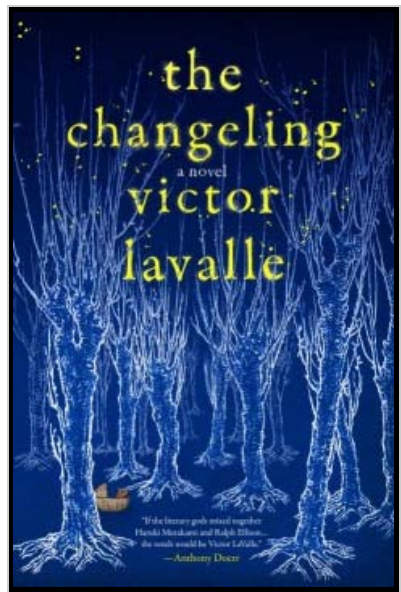




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# The Changeling

by Victor LaValle

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Rating: 0.0/5 (0 votes cast)

**From the Publisher:** "If the literary gods mixed together Haruki Murakami and Ralph Ellison, the result would be Victor LaValle."—Anthony Doerr, author of *All the Light We Cannot See* When Apollo Kagwa's father disappeared, all he left his son were strange recurring dreams and a box of books stamped with the word IMPROBILIA. Now Apollo is a father himself—and as he and his wife, Emma, are settling into their new lives as parents, exhaustion and anxiety start to take their toll. Apollo's old dreams return and Emma begins acting odd. Irritable and disconnected from their new baby boy, at first Emma seems to be exhibiting signs of postpartum depression, but it quickly becomes clear that her troubles go even deeper. Before Apollo can do anything to help, Emma commits a horrific act—beyond any parent's comprehension—and vanishes, seemingly into thin air. Thus begins...

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## About The Author

Victor LaValle

Victor LaValle is the author of six previous works of fiction: three novels, two novellas, and a collection of short stories. His novels have been included in best-of-the-year lists by *The New York Times Book Review*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, *The Nation*,...

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## What We Say

Here is a modern fairy tale set in New York City. Not a Disney-fied fairy tale with a neat little message of uplift and a happy ending. Uh-uh. This is one of those dark fairy tales, the unexpurgated versions preserved for adults complete with violence and undertones of sex and in which the main message is one of caution: the world is a lot stranger and scarier than you're willing to admit. It's a Grimm fairy tale with the grimness front and center. LaValle burst onto the scene with his excellent short story collection "Slapboxing With Jesus," followed up by the bleak but mordantly funny novel "The Ecstatic." He might have continued in this literary, "New Yorker" friendly vein. But LaValle has found his purchase in

subverting genres like sci-fi and horror, playing off H.P. Lovecraft and the like. So here he begins in compelling mode, telling of the romance and marriage of a young couple up to the point when the wife Emma gives birth on a stalled subway train in a scene that is charm itself, down to the street performers who gamely hide the intimate moment from camera-phone wielding passengers peering in from other cars. Then things go wrong. The wife becomes more and more depressed (postpartum?) and the husband simply doesn't know what to do, other than beg her to keep taking the medicine she's been prescribed. Things go truly off the rails in a way that will terrify any new parent, tapping into your darkest fears about whether you (or your spouse) is up for the daunting task of raising a child to that moment when you realize the child has a mind of their own. Part "Rosemary's Baby" (the movie, not the book), part Stephen King, LaValle's story is emotionally rich long before it treads into dark fantasy territory. Our hero Apollo Kagwa -- a latch-key kid turned avid purveyor of rare and precious books -- is a memorable character, a father who does whatever he must to protect his child but never fails to remember you can't protect your child by destroying who you are. It's creepy and fun and unexpected and if I wasn't wholly on board by the end (horror isn't quite my thing), I have to respect a book that I put aside once or twice because it was freaking me out a little. If you've just welcomed a newborn into the world, you might want to wait a while before reading this.... -- Michael Giltz

## What Others Say

### Advance praise for *The Changeling*

"A dark fairy tale of New York, full of magic and loss, myth and mystery, love and madness. *The Changeling* is a mesmerizing, monumental work."—Marlon James, author of *A Brief History of Seven Killings*

"Like a good Coen brothers film, this genre-defying, achingly literate phantasmagoria of a novel will work every nook and cranny of the imagination, taking the reader to places we're either too afraid to visit or never knew existed."—Paul Beatty, author of *The Sellout*

"This year, the most unsettling novel I read, the scariest novel I read, and the most beautiful novel I read were all the same one—Victor LaValle's *The Changeling*. A father who loses his wife and child in an act of horror must hunt them into metaphorical hell to get them back again. This story feels less written, than channeled. I say this without exaggeration: It's a masterpiece."—Mat Johnson, author of *Pym* and *Loving Day*

"LaValle has a knack for blending social realism with genre tropes, and this blend of horror story and fatherhood fable is surprising and admirably controlled....

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