



Blockbuster

Lisa von Biela

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In the year 2025, survival of the fittest takes on new importance. Hungry for market share and driven by greed, BigPharma companies battle to produce the next blockbuster drug. And they will go to any length to win—and survive.

Dan Tremaine has found the secret to success for Denali Labs. Phil Horton is desperate to save his family firm, Horton Drugs. When they're put in a head-to-head competition to find the cure for a deadly flesh-eating disease, who will win?

And at what cost?

The clock is ticking. The body count is rising.

And someone has created a monster.

Blockbuster Details

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Author : Lisa von Biela

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From Reader Review Blockbuster for online ebook

Andi Rawson says

I find this one hard to review. I like Lisa Von Biela, but this one fell short for me. I found the characters in the story not only hard to relate to, but hard to even like. The main character, Sylvia was despicable, but not particularly interesting. Most of the characters seemed to either fit the cookie-cutter "bad" mold or the "good/unremarkable" mold. And the dialogue between characters in this one seemed to be more of an afterthought.

The novel is set in a future that includes a lot of futuristic inventions with cheesy names like "WindowWall" and "ZapperBox" but with not enough background on them to really set the scene. The story itself revolves around the outbreak of a new virus that is like a nastier version of MRSA on speed and happens to be called "MRSA-II."

I love the premise of the book. I think with the recent Ebola concerns that this could have been outright terrifying if it played out differently. Although this definitely wasn't my favorite by her, I look forward to reading more from Lisa Von Biela in the future.

Pamellia says

BLOCKBUSTER by Lisa von Biela
March 17 to March 19, 2015
Darkfuse from December 2014

From the first to the last word, this was a nightmare that simply did not let up. I love the language used in this novel. Just enough medical and research terms to be believable, but not over done. The characters were well described and developed a bit throughout the book.

The book raises a lot of questions about what was really going on in this world of research horrors. Could something like this really happen in our own world today? Who knows. Maybe not a quickly since it takes so long to get medication approved, but who knows about one day.

I like all the futuristic things in this book. New sort of phones, microwaves in every day life and the big "human testing" machines used by the drug companies.

An excellent book. Recommended

Frank Errington says

Review copy

In the not too distant future, in the ultra competitive world of BigPharma, Denali Labs has produced blockbuster after blockbuster. No other BigPharma firm had ever had that degree of success in so little time.

Lisa von Biela has come up with an all too believable story about the lengths some companies may go to to

increase market share and insure huge profits.

It's bad enough what BigPharma up to, but what happens next is unthinkable.

Blockbuster is not a great read, the characters are pretty much one-dimensional and the threats are somewhat predictable, but the story itself is scary as hell. I certainly wouldn't recommend reading this if you're a bit under the weather.

Blockbuster is available now for the Kindle from Darkfuse publishers. If you subscribe to Kindle Unlimited you can read this for no additional charge and if you have Amazon Prime you can borrow this book through the Kindle Owner's Lending Library.

Somewhat Recommended.

Mike says

Like some of the other reviews I read after reading this, it was a little hard to review Blockbuster. On one hand I really enjoy reading Lisa's book. On the other hand not the biggest fan of this type of story (Medical Thriller). This story is centered around two big pharmaceutical companies, Denali Labs and Horton Drugs. Denali Labs the big dog of BigPharma companies and Horton Drugs trying to keep a float. A outbreak of a virus called MRSA II has the two companies in competition to find a cure for it. This would help keep the doors open for Horton Drugs if they find a cure first. How far will these two companies go to beat each other. This is where the story gets going. My two concerns about this book were I didn't care a lot about the characters and how the story finished. But I do like the way she writes and the nice flow to her stories. I'm looking forward to her next book Skinshift in June of 2015. I gave Blockbuster 3 stars.

I received an e-arc of this book from DarkFuse/NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Majanka says

Book Review originally published here: <http://www.iheartreading.net/reviews/...>

Blockbuster is at times an amazing book, that offers a sharp insight in the competitive market, economy, market shares, and what companies might do when driven by greed. Unfortunately, while the book set out to outlin a bleak future, and succeeds in some parts, it fails in others. A good concept, but it doesn't reach far beyond that.

In 2025, pharamaceutical industries struggle to survive. Horton Drugs is an oldtimer in the field, a respectable company with records dating back several decades. But with patents running out, and no new drug on the horizon – no new blockbuster – the company is looking at bankruptcy. Phil Horton, the last Horton heir, faces the impossible task to save his family firm.

On the other hand, we have Dan Tremaine, owner of competition pharmaceutical lab, Denali Labs. Dan has no qualms going to any length to make more money. The company has only been around for a small number of years, yet it has produced one blockbuster drug after another.

Then comes MRSA II, a flesh-eating bacterium that kills people overnight. With no known cure, the president makes an offer to both companies – whoever comes up with the cure first, will win a major contract.

The story concept and plot worked great, and formed a strong backbone for this book. At the same time, the possibility of something like this ever happened for real, is so big that as a reader, that chilling thought stick to the back of your mind while you read through the book. The characters are intriguing for the most part, especially the ones belonging in the Horton camp. It's easy to see the choices Dan Tremaine would make, but the choices Phil and his co-workers make are a lot more surprising.

The true horror of the book lies in how realistic all of it is. It shows a bleak, cynical look into the future. Although that's certainly scary, the book doesn't offer much else to get the dark vibe going. While the characters are intriguing, their dialogue is often unnatural, and some of the characters – in particular Sylvia – are hard to connect with. The writing could use some work too, sometimes the pacing felt messed up, going too fast one chapter and too slow the next. Instead of showing us what happened, the author often tells us about it, which made the writing feel flat and boring. The ending was predictable too, and happened in a rush, and ultimately, left me feeling a little dissatisfied.

It's certainly not a bad read, but with a topic matter as intriguing as this, I just expected more.

Chris says

I received an ARC copy of this title from the publisher through Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

Another fine novel from Darkfuse. I really enjoyed this medical/sci-fi thriller. Very topical in light of recent ebola outbreaks in the states. I would like to think of this as entirely fictional but I can't discount the plausibility of the story line.

Plot driven novel that is well thought out with not a single lull in the action, I read this in two sittings and am definitely interested in reading more of Ms. Von Biela's works.

4 stars from me.

Matthew says

Ever since reading Lisa von Biela's excellent novel The Janus Legacy, I've been hooked on her writing so I was really looking forward to Blockbuster.

Unfortunately for me, this one fell short. The premise is wonderful - pharmaceutical companies competing with each other to come up with the next big miracle drug that will eradicate an illness - but the execution was lacking for me.

Set in the near future, several inventions were used and mentioned that left me feeling left out of the story; to my knowledge, none of these things are imminent so a little more background as to their use would have been welcomed.

The characters felt flat to me and most weren't very likable either because of their personality (they were

written to be that way I believe) or through their actions and decisions. Either way, I had a hard time connecting to most of them.

Overall, Lisa has written extraordinary medical thrillers like *The Janus Legacy* and while this one wasn't on that level for me, I still enjoyed reading it and I look forward to reading future books from her.

Bill says

[It pisses me off, the pharma companies fucked up pills and commercials that don't even tell you what the pills are for and then the whole commercial is how you will be shooting blood out your asshole and go

Kimberly says

In *BLOCKBUSTER*, by Lisa von Biela, we are set into the near future of 2025. The Pharmaceutical companies now utilize these "new machines" to come up with drugs without necessitating the use of human test subjects.

Naturally, the two biggest Pharmaceutical giants, Denali and Horton, are in competition to create the next big "blockbuster" drug cure. They are both ruthless, and without any moral scruples; which, sadly, strikes me as very realistic.

The first outbreak (MRSA II), starts out as a rash, and quickly begins to eat through the infected person's flesh to the bone. Once that virus is dealt with, a new, mutated variant "conveniently" pops up so that Denali and Horton can once again race to find a cure. The new virus is even worse....

The problem I had with this novel was mainly the characterization. I absolutely could NOT connect to Sylvia, the main protagonist, and found her behavior both abhorrent and contradictory, at times. The conversations just felt hollow to me, and I honestly couldn't get into the story as well because of this.

Although the concept of viruses and pharmaceutical competition is relevant even in this day and age, the execution and lack of any characters with redeeming qualities, made this book one that I just didn't, personally, find a page-turner.

I've enjoyed other books by Lisa von Biela in the past, and hope that her next one is more like those.

I received a copy of this book from NetGalley/DarkFuse in exchange for an honest review.

Kaisersoze says

This is the first DarkFuse release that I've read which largely fell flat for me.

An interesting enough concept is on display in **Blockbuster**, what with two rival drug companies in the near future creating their own bacterial strains so they can manufacture the cure and make squillions in the process, but then accidentally unleashing something they failed to envision which could endanger everyone. The execution of this concept, however, was flawed. For example, there was far too much expository

dialogue as author von Biela committed the ultimate sin of telling rather than showing. In addition, the characters spoke in ways that rarely ever sounded like realistic dialogue to me. Said characters were themselves largely unlikeable or unrealistic, making it difficult to connect with or care about them. And the plot itself pulled no surprises on its way to an entirely predictable ending.

I guess nobody bats one hundred, not ever; not even DarkFuse Publishing. Foolish of me to half-expect otherwise.

2 Catoonishly Evil CEOs for **Blockbuster**.

This review is based on an eARC from Darkfuse Publishing made available through Netgalley.

Nev Murray says

I received an advance copy of this book from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review. Also this book is published by DarkFuse and you generally cannot go wrong with anything they put out to the masses.

Again first thing I have read from Lisa Von Biela but coming again from DarkFuse, I expected good things. Unfortunately I didn't get them.

The year is 2025. Denali Labs is a pharmaceutical company run by Dan Tremaine and has been leading the way in "blockbuster" drugs for a few years. Horton Drugs is run by Phil Horton and is struggling for survival. A new superbug, MRSA-II is starting to spread to epidemic proportions. The President is in panic mode. He contacts Tremaine and Horton and offers them a huge deal to whoever comes up with a drug to combat the bug first. For Horton this is an opportunity to bag his own "blockbuster" and rescue the company. What he doesn't know is it's a foregone conclusion that Tremaine and Denali will win the race. They did after all engineer the MRSA-II bug and released it on the public. They already have the cure. Horton has one option to save the company. To copy Denali's methods and release their own superbug whilst already having the cure. Their bug however mutates with catastrophic results.

This book is categorised under mystery/thriller. I'm sorry to say it wasn't much of a mystery and the thrills were more of a kiddies ride than a full blown roller coaster. In essence it had the makings of a good story. It's the sort of thing that people nowadays already have suspicions that the pharmaceutical giants act like this. It had the potential to fill the reader with dread and have them sitting on the edge of their seats biting their nails that a cure would be found just in time. For me it didn't do any of that. I couldn't "feel" anything from the main characters. They were dull and hard to cheer on. There was no urgency about the story and this made it more of a page dragger than a page turner.

For me to sum this book up I would have to say it was disappointing. Easy to read but nothing to grab you by the throat and keep you going. Flat. It's a real pity because the idea was a good one.

2.5 stars but not rounding up to 3.

Michael Hicks says

Lisa von Biela's Blockbuster is a solid medical thriller that reads well, but lacks much in the way of

character depth.

So, let me tackle the bad and get this gruesome bit of business out of the way first. Despite having a number of principal cast members, none of them feel very well defined or memorable. Outside of Dan Tremaine, owner of Denali Labs, I'm having a bit of a hard time remembering any of the other characters. There's the female scientist, Sylvia, and her lawyer husband, as well as the scientist's older co-worker who has a crush on her – and I remember that particular detail because as soon as he's introduced von Biela spends a number of paragraphs telling us how much he's crushing on her. There's also the US President who is obsessed with the word "Homeland" and uses it unsparingly.

Dialogue is a bit flat, wooden, and rings a bit out of tune a bit too often to my ears. There's also a few instances where dialogue serves primarily as infodump, because von Biela wants to convey certain information about the world her story inhabits, but can only relay it through long-winded conversations where people talk in ways that very few real-life humans speak.

Those are by big gripes with this book. Now, the good.

In spite of her stilted characters, Blockbuster tells a really damn good story. In fact, I found the story itself to be so gripping that the problems I had with the character's realizations were not the deal breaker they otherwise might have been.

This germ-driven story of conspiracy and manipulation is great fodder to build a plot from. There's all kinds of techno-whiz-bang stuff of the near-future coloring her world, including a nifty high-tech smart watch that puts the disappointing and strangely mundane iWatch to shame. But the crux is the story revolves around an all-too plausible horror of BigPharma playing a game of chicken with modified diseases and a high susceptible public in an effort to cause epidemics and drive up profits. It's truly insidious stuff, and Tremaine, with his pseudo-cocaine habit, could easily be The Wolf Of Pharmaceuticals.

The disease in question is MRSA-II, which makes its flesh-eating predecessor look like the flu. I can typically handle traditional, vile horror romps. But, I've got a thing for needles, and von Biela's judicious and vivid descriptions of the toll MRSA-II takes on the human body, and the early efforts at treatment, had me squirming.

Most importantly, Blockbuster is just, plain and simple, a compelling story. Some might even go so far as to call it an...infectious read? Puns aside, for me these good bits outweighed the bad, and I was drawn in by the dueling businesses/grudge match of Denali Labs and Horton Drugs and how the response to the changing pharmaceutical marketplace trumps ethical practices. There's a writ-large morality play underpinning Blockbuster, and most of the characters in this book either lack ethics or have huge blind spots that allow them to trudge their way through enormous ethical lapses, bad decisions, and terrorism, all in the name of winning, while the wee little people pay the ultimate price for the rank hubris of these corporation's bottom lines. Regardless of its narrowly defined characters and some schlocky dialogue, there's a really good tale of smart bio-horror here. The execution may fall a little flat, but plot-wise it's on the money.

Kate says

3.5*

Disclaimer: I received a copy of this book through Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

In the very near future, a new virus, MRSAlI, has been unleashed and is the cause of thousands of deaths. A

competition begins between two BigPharma companies to find the cure, Denali, a successful new lab and Horton, a family owned lab that is struggling to find what is called a 'blockbuster' that will see their lab thrive.

Horton labs thinks it has found a way to compete with Denali but whilst doing so unleashes a new 'superbug' that is even more deadly than MRSAIL.

I have mixed feelings about this book. On the one hand it was pretty entertaining, a very fast paced read that held my interest right up to the end. The other side of the coin is that the characters didn't feel real to me and weren't very likeable. Sylvia is a young scientist working at Horton, when first introduced she appears to have some ethics around her work but these all go out the window when the CEO comes up with a plan to introduce a mutant strain of MRSAIL that has mild symptoms and can be easily cured, by them. They will introduce the virus and then market the cure a week or so later, creating a product stream and getting Horton some much needed profit. She immediately jumps on board with this idea without questioning or thinking about the consequences of their actions. This made her an extremely unsympathetic character and one that I couldn't get invested in at all. Another thing I didn't like is that no one is ultimately held accountable for what happens, this is not a gripe against the author as I'm sure that it's only based on how white collar crime is handled today.

The fact that this story centres around corrupt pharma companies makes it especially chilling and it certainly gives food for thought around how many of the world's illnesses are manufactured so that companies can cash in with a ready made cure. Aside from the character issues and my own anger at the subject matter, I did enjoy this read and would recommend it for those that enjoy medical thrillers.

Paul Nelson says

Blockbuster is an intriguing medical, pharmaceutical industry thriller come drama that explores the depths this business will plunder to introduce their blockbuster new drug.

This book is all about the horrors and repercussions of introducing viruses and pathogens into the population with the sole intention of turning a profit with a conspicuous cure, seems worryingly feasible, and I've got to say a little too obvious at times.

The drug in question is MRSA-II, a flesh eating nightmare of a pathogen that kills with no remorse, the good old President of the U.S. calls two of the top Pharma companies to the white house and implores them to find a cure. The government will meet production and distribution costs and it's a win win situation, big money involved. Especially if the cures already sitting in your lab waiting for the perfect moment to be released to the population. It's just a question of holding on, no concern for the lives expiring in the meantime but your companies going to save the day it's just a question of how long you're going to wait.

The precedent is set it's a free house, there's big money to be made. Just gotta pray your pathogen doesn't evolve into something far more deadly and the small matter of your conscience getting in the way.

Now Blockbuster is very well written novel and if this sounds like your thing, you'll enjoy it I'm sure. It's just not something I'd normally read, the horror comes purely from people's actions and blatant disregard for human life and I felt it a touch incredulous at times. That's purely me though.

Could this be a future blueprint for the industry, you've got to hope not and it'd be a highly dangerous one at that.

A 3.5 Rating

I received Blockbuster from Darkfuse & Netgalley in exchange for an honest review and that's what you've got.

Also posted at <http://paulnelson.booklikes.com/post/...>

Scott says

Blockbuster is a medical thriller set in the near future. Denali Labs is the leading pharmaceutical company in the world, consistently producing successful and profitable new medications. Their competitors begin to suspect that no company could be that good without taking some shortcuts.

Blockbuster raises and explores ethical questions, much as Lisa von Biela has done in her past novels. These moral quandaries combined with a breakneck storytelling pace make Blockbuster a real page turner. The characters act in despicable ways at times but their motivations are clear and in some cases understandable. The current Ebola situation makes this story about runaway viruses especially chilling.

A drawback of Blockbuster is certain portions of dialogue. There are some instances of exposition being forced in to a conversation, with characters saying out loud things that they both know, making the scene feel stilted and unnatural. For instance, I don't think a husband would say "now that we are established - you as a researcher and me as a law professor" over dinner to his wife on their honeymoon.

In total, I would recommend Blockbuster to thriller fans. It has a great story, a fast pace, and raises questions about where the pharmaceutical industry is going if it continues on its current path. 3.5 stars.
