



Journey into Mystery: Fear Itself

Kieron Gillen , Doug Braithwaite (Illustrator)

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The shadow of Fear Itself looms over Asgard, and only Loki holds the key to stopping the impending war between Odin's army and the Serpent! With Thor imprisoned by the All-Father, and the rest of Asgard mistrustful of the young reincarnation of the god of mischief, Loki takes what help he can get from his new avian advisor Ikol, the undead Tyr, God of Battles, and a bloodthirsty Hel wolf, and journeys to the underworld. There he hopes to best the Serpent's devious machinations and undermine the god of fear's plan for world domination. But even the trickster, when it comes to Loki, nothing is as it seems!

COLLECTING: Journey into Mystery 622-626, Thor Spotlight , Fear Itself Spotlight

Journey into Mystery: Fear Itself Details

Date : Published February 1st 2012 by Marvel Comics (first published April 3rd 2011)

ISBN : 9780785148401

Author : Kieron Gillen , Doug Braithwaite (Illustrator)

Format : Hardcover 144 pages

Genre : Sequential Art, Comics, Graphic Novels, Superheroes, Marvel, Fantasy, Graphic Novels Comics, Comic Book

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From Reader Review Journey into Mystery: Fear Itself for online ebook

Chantaal says

Loki had never been a particularly interesting character to me, and when he died trying to save Asgard in Siege, I kind of shrugged and kept reading along. Gillen's run on Journey Into Mystery with Kid Loki has gotten rave reviews, and with Kid Loki joining the Young Avengers (with Gillen writing) in January, I thought it was high time to read up on him.

Gillen breathes life into Loki, and his challenge makes him immediately interesting: he is Loki reborn, and while he is the same soul and has some of the same personality, wit, and mischievous ways, can he really be held as accountable as the rest of Asgard (save Thor) holds him? Do his past actions condemn him for the rest of his life, even if the final one was sacrificing himself to save Asgard (from the very threat he created)? With everyone aware of what he's to become, will nurture be able to change him, or will Loki's nature lead him down the same course? Boom, Philosophied.

(Ever since falling in love with Philosophy this semester and changing my major to it, I've wanted to say that somewhere. *BOOM! PHILOSOPHIED*. I blame How I Met Your Mother.)

With all those questions and more being raised in Journey Into Mystery, Loki has become a character I'm deeply invested in. I mean, how can you resist this?

David says

"The humans of the Internet are uncouth! When I said I was an Asgardian god, they called me a troll!"

Yet another series that has undergone major events since the last time I was paying attention to the Marvel Universe. So apparently Loki died, and got "reincarnated" as a younger version of himself who is Thor's adoring little bro again. Except everyone remembers him as the evil god of chaos who almost destroyed Asgard (regularly). Loki wants to prove he's a good guy... except he's still Loki.

While not being entirely caught up on events, I didn't need to be. This book has a mythic feel that fits the best Asgardian storylines, where Thor & co. resemble *gods* more than superheroes. And cute fourteen-year-old Loki, with his pinchable cheeks, prophesied since the beginning of time to be a villain unto the end of time, is a living question mark. Can a god with all that mythic baggage actually... turn out differently? And is he *reaaaaally* acting with noble intentions?

That is what is most intriguing to me, because as young Loki goes about trying to rescue his brother Thor (who a pissed-off, power-mad Odin has thrown in prison), he proceeds to go on various quests in which he screws with everyone from Surtur to Hela to Mephisto to Garm to the Midgard Serpent. Even at fourteen,

he's already learned to use that trickster tongue of his to sow chaos. The kid is already playing "Let's you and him fight" with hell-deities far more ancient than him.

"Dire news!"

"You've already brought 'dire news,' Loki."

"Direr news!"

And, he obviously is also already starting to play a long game. Which he claims is for all the best reasons. But he is still Loki, and you can see even if he isn't *trying* to bring evil, spinning mischief is like breathing for him, and it's quickly spinning out of his control.

Really enjoyed this. I am sure, Loki being Loki, he'll have to go dark eventually. Which makes it all the more poignant that right now he's very much a kid who just wants his big brother Thor to pat him on the shoulder and tell him he done good.

Mely says

More than anything else, this reminds me of the great early days of John Ney Rieber's run on *The Books of Magic*. A clever and unpredictable and frequently vulnerable protagonist, a true sense of the numinous and the strange, old myths and old fairy tales mingled together, the sense of a great and varied cast, a large and extraordinary universe.

I'm deducting a point because the plotline is sort of choppy -- clearly a lot is going on in other *Fear Itself* tie-ins--but this really is marvelous.

Full review, including references to but no spoilers for the next volume.

Paul Fergus says

The hype on blogs and tumblrs intrigued me. A "good" kid Loki exploring his personality and wrestling with his evil past seemed a good setup.

Unfortunately, I'm again reminded why I stopped buying Marvel comics 14 years ago. Things haven't improved, and in some ways they've become absolutely reactionary.

The basic premise, while promising and at times compelling, is still a dead end. The fourth wall gets crossed with cheesy and at times cynical humor, as if it's the audience's fault nothing ever happens in the Marvel universe.

Loki never reflects believably to me, nor do his crocodile tears elicit any sympathy. The adults of Asgard are all chumps and grumps, none of them showing much maturity or acting believably. Thor is good because

he's too dumb to be anything else.

I do like that Loki basically wins, but his victories seem to come out of nowhere. We're never privy to his thoughts or feelings in any meaningful way. He's just going through the plot motions.

Speaking of the story, the writing is at times average, at other times ridiculously rushed. I had to re-read some pages to figure out what just happened--not because of any surprise reveals but because I couldn't understand what people were doing. It's that nonsensical.

The art is poor. The panels don't gel together and are poorly composed, making the story problems harder to ignore. There seems to be a jump between the rushed sketch and chicken-scratch style, and the clear line but bland get it done figure drawing style going on here. The colors are poor as well; it's all very darkly filtered and monochromatic earth tones.

Basically its business as usual, ho hum stuff with neither indie risk-taking nor commercial mastery to back it up.

I will say though that the book is significant in that the creators seem to recognize there's a problem. The whole Marvel universe has been out of ideas for decades, and the half life of reboots and re-imaginings always seems to shrink further. The fact that both Lokis realize change is good and needed is a step in the right direction.

Unfortunately, articulating an action off that realization is still impossible. And that means the stance ultimately has to be "that's just how it is," which means only overt techniques like writer force and ironic humor are available to craft further stories.

It's still a dodge and a distraction, so that Marvel can pick your pocket one last time.

Jeff says

The rickety roller coaster ride that is the Fear Itself reading adventure continues.

Finally, it's a Marvel mega-crossover book that has a relatively coherent self-contained plotline. Excelsior!! This one doesn't deal with the seven evil hammers that have fallen to Earth, it's an Asgardian behind-the-scenes look at the machinations of tween Loki.

I don't know if this was by design (and I'm too lazy to look it up), but the Fear Itself series is a decent homage to the world building skills of Jack Kirby and Stan Lee, from the Asgardian lore to the using of the Journey Into Mystery title, one of Marvel's oldest comics and the first one to host Thor back in the sixties.

We've had regular trouble maker Loki, Loki the impersonator, Loki as a hot woman, and now he's has come back as a kid. Remembering all the death and destruction Loki has wrought in the past, most Asgardians are not happy about this, but because Thor, that old softie, has enlisted the Warriors Three as his protectors, few have the courage to do anything about it.

Even as a tween, Loki has the whole Machiavelli thing down pat, double dealing with Hela, Mephisto, Surtur, the Serpent and all sorts of demons and undead. Even though this is apparently for the good of

Asgard, Loki's pre-hormonal motivations are always suspect.

I'm not a big fan of the Thor titles, they leave me with numbness between the ears, but this is an interesting take on all that is Asgardian.

Next: Fear Itself – H.E.R.B.I.E.

Question that bothers only me.

Did Loki ever do that "favor" for Spider-Man?

???? ???? #BookDiet2019 says

In the beginning, many of the answers ended up being 'LOKI'.

Kieron Gillen took on the task to write a rather young version of the trickster Norse god Loki for this quaint long-time series, *Journey Into Mystery*. His run lasted from issues #622-645 starting with the first arc entitled *Fear Itself*. I'll try to contextualize where this continuity falls in the Marvelverse but only very briefly since I've only researched about it and not actually read it myself.

From what I understand, Gillen's series starts right after the events in the major crossover event *SIEGE* where Loki tricks Norman Osborn into doing something catastrophic which has resulted with the 'Void', and as that clusterfuck takes the toll, Loki suddenly grew a conscience midway through it, and needed to repent for what the Void had transpired (which I think wiped out realms across time and space or something). He tried to undo the damage but the Void 'sensed' it and attacks him viciously right before Thor's eyes. Loki sincerely apologizes to Thor under his dying breath.

Basically, it was much like what happened in the last few scenes of *Thor: The Dark World*, only Loki in *SIEGE* really bit the dust and his brother was heartbroken for a while until he discovered that Loki--being Loki--managed to erase himself in the Book of Hel which allows him to cheat death, so that his soul just gets reincarnated (I assume for eternity) each time he dies. So Thor searches for the reincarnation who turned out to be living as a street vendor/thief in Misgard (our realm). Thor confronts him and gives him back his old identity though Loki still remains in the same form of that child.

Understandably, NO ONE IS PLEASED ABOUT THIS, and they have every right to it. Iron Man was probably ready to kill this young Loki if it wasn't for Thor passionately defending his reasons why he brought his brother back. Even Odin was not happy about this development. But everyone just kind of left it alone rather than face the wrath of the god of thunder. After all, to a lot of people, it would be morally unnerving to execute a boy of ten or twelve for the crimes his old self had committed. So, reluctantly and with some mistrust, everyone decided to just give the boy a chance to prove them wrong.

Hence, Kid Loki is born. This is where Gillen's series picks up.

Now I think Al Ewing's *Loki: Agent of Asgard* can be considered the second act (or sequel) to Gillen's own run where the latter has a twenty-something Loki still trying to wipe his ledger of crimes clean but his time

by going on missions as assigned by the All-Mother who currently rules Asgard. I liked that series so far but it's still untidy in a lot of places (especially the second volume) which is not something I could say for Gillen's *Journey Into Mystery*.

This was well-paced, thoughtful and tons of fun. Kid Loki has become my new Damian Wayne (current Robin of DC's New 52). There are parallels to their journey; both are young boys who are heavily misunderstood as a whole because of their dark backgrounds (Kid Loki is a reincarnation of a monster while Damian Wayne was raised by the League of Assassins to one day replace the Demon's Head), and in spite of this darkness they are still pretty much 'children' whose youth and determination to fight back against the prejudice that their lives have been defined with is what makes up and sustains their emotional character arc for their respective series.

I suppose I just have a thing for badass kid characters so Kid Loki was once again a resonant figure for me. I find him adorable in a lot of ways since *Fear Itself* began but this doesn't lessen the seriousness of the story arc itself. Here Kid Loki tries to do something about his bad reputation by using his cunning and tricks for the good of everyone; even if the very people he wants to save and protect don't believe he is ever capable of change.

And that's the central theme of Kid Loki's arc (and, to some extent, Ewing's *Agent of Asgard*): he either **CHANGES** or **DIES**, seemingly until he gets it right. After all, he's immune to the permanence of death and will be reincarnated over and over. The irony is not lost to me; reincarnation by virtue is change but Loki's greatest challenge remains the majority's overall perspective of who he is. Is he forever bound to be cast in the role of villain? Won't his new good deeds ever erase the rotten ones--the atrocities--in the past that he has committed?

Much like *AoA*, Gillen's Kid Loki is almost a meta-commentary of the narrative for a villain archetype itself, a criticism of the stifling concept of black and white morality and humanity's tendency to pigeonhole bad guys to a doomed cycle of evil and misdeeds. *Fear Itself* is still the first arc of this run but Gillen effectively addresses this issue through the way he writes and portrays Kid Loki who so desperately wants to prove he can be a good person--but perhaps this is only possible if people will also allow him. It's not a one-sided journey which is unfortunate for Loki. Luckily, his brother Thor does have faith in his capacity to grow and evolve into a hero.

And maybe this time Loki earnestly wants to be a **HERO**. Just once. You could tell how much he craves for it and how much he will work hard to prove he can be worthy of such esteem.

My favorite issue for this volume is the Spotlight one where Kid Loki spies into the various conversations of the people in Asgard concerning their opinions about him. What he found has not been encouraging and yet Thor promises him this:

[CLICK FOR LARGER IMAGE]

In a nutshell, *Journey Into Mystery: Fear Itself* is recommended for all you closeted and avid Loki fans out there who want to get to know more about this enigmatic character in the comics medium. I find that both writers (Gillen and Ewing) are taking interesting turns in trying to unravel Loki's role as a villain and whether or not it's possible for him to establish and re-define himself with whatever 'label' he chooses to be identified with.

I think that we all do that in our lives. Loki's story helps us further internalize the discussion as to whether or not we can truly be the masters of our fates; the captains of our souls.

RECOMMENDED: 9/10

DO READ MY REVIEWS AT:

Jeff Lanter says

I have missed reading a Thor comic for a year or so and I remember hearing people say that Journey Into Mystery was good a few years ago so I thought I would give it a try. I liked this first story arc, but didn't love it. The focus is on Kid Loki who is a humorous and entertaining character was a little surprising, but not not in a bad way. This also felt like a fable or mythology with all the different gods and a character traveling around to curry favor with them. However, there wasn't a lot of action and it all felt a little too wordy for my tastes. The quest also seemed to be never ending and I never really understood where Kid Loki was heading. I didn't read Fear Itself so that may explain my ignorance, but by the third or fourth issue, this started to feel like a bit of a chore to get through and when I finished the last issue, I didn't feel compelled to read more. I did like the art quite a bit and wanted to enjoy this series more than I did. Perhaps it is just not my taste or I chose to read it at the wrong time.

Sesana says

This was a lot of fun. It felt like a myth, one of those "clever younger son" stories. I really do like the idea of Kid Loki, taking the character in a very new direction (which is actually, in some ways, a very old direction). And I think Gillen hit the right emotional notes here. I got why Thor resurrected Loki in the first place, and why he wants to protect him. I also get why Asgardians in general can't seem to trust him. Can you blame them? And Loki himself feels right. Different, sure, but I understand his reactions, thoughts, and emotions at this point. I'm interested to see where his story arc ends up.

Anne says

Full disclosure: I read issues 622-626 digitally on Marvel Unlimited. But according to the blurb, this volume also has Thor Spotlight & Fear Itself Spotlight included in it...which I couldn't find. But it would have been a real pain in the ass to review each issue separately, so just go along with it, ok? However, if you get the *actual* volume...other stuff is included. ~~I'm so jealous!~~

After reading Young Avengers I was fascinated with the *new* Loki, and I wanted to find out how he...well, got to be this incarnation of **LOKI**.

A friend of mine recommended this.

Thank you, Sesana. You were right, this was a great place to start!

Quick (Highly Abbreviated) Backstory:

The old Loki was mostly responsible for the Siege on Asgard.

In an unbelievable turn of events, he was also the one who sacrificed himself to stop it. After Thor came back from the 'dead', he resurrected Loki...'cause he missed his annoying little brother.

And guess what? Now he *really is* an annoying kid.

Anyway, reading this didn't answer all of the questions I had, but it was a good start.

Loki is trying to figure out who he really is. Or who he really is *this time around*. The first part is all about a Big Secret he discovers about himself, and the second half is all about him trying to do what he thinks is right for Thor and Asgard.

In a very Loki sort of way.

One of the main reasons I wanted to read this one, was to discover how Loki and Leah knew each other. After all, she was pretty pissed off at him when she caught up to him in the Young Avengers.

I was a bit disappointed on that front, since nothing happened in this one that would have explained her later actions. I guess I'll just have to keep going with this title to find out the whole story.

And, yes, I will certainly continue with this one. It did get a tad *Asgardy*, but (surprisingly) that didn't turn me off this time around. It's not *Har-De-Har-Har!* funny, but it does have quite a bit of humor infused with the plot, and that sort of thing keeps me happy.

Overall?

Good plot, good art, good dialogue.

Recommended for fans of Loki!

Joy says

This is well worth investigating, even if you, like me, had no interest in the big Fear Itself crossover event--though it has superhero characters, it feels a lot more like a fantasy comic. The obvious point of comparison for me is *Sandman*. Loki here is reborn as a teen, and that's a great twist: the way he is loved but not trusted and is confined and ordered about by certain characters is very true to the teen experience (even for teens who haven't, you know, been a supervillain in a past life). I especially love the Loki-Thor interactions. The tone here is, by turns, mythic and playful, and that's just right for a story about a trickster god. (I laughed and laughed at Loki's discovery of the intarwebz via his Stark phone. Obvious fake is obvious, indeed!)

Aaron says

Really great lead-in for Gillen's Journey into Mystery run, and it's even a damn crossover story! Fear Itself was a terrible event for Marvel, but it's nice to see at least one great thing emerged from its ashes.

When Gillen took over for JMS's Thor run (wherein he introduced the idea of this Kid Loki character), I was pretty underwhelmed. It seems I should've given him a lot more of the benefit of the doubt, because he's really nailed a completely new but still very familiar character with his version of Loki.

He doesn't sacrifice an ounce of the scheming, conniving, backstabbing Loki that's always been a great villain to pop up now and again. But instead of an evil, impenetrable God of Mischief, we're left instead with an equally duplicitous Loki who somehow manages to use his powers (mostly) for good. It's really amazing Gillen was able to pull this off so seamlessly.

He's written this Loki as almost a kind of politician, doing favors and making promises and back room deals, all to accomplish what he believes is the greater good. There are no monologues or Big Evil Plans. It's all in service to Loki's own view of what is right, which doesn't always line up with what the reader or the "good guys" want. It's remarkable.

I really love this book so far, and I hope Gillen can keep up the pace. If he can, this might be one of the best Marvel reinventions ever.

Mike says

I am more than a little surprised how much I enjoyed this, Gillen's previous work in the Asgard tales has left me underwhelmed, and made it seem like he really didn't have the talent to follow up the JMS legacy. But I've seen many of my favourite comic creators reference Gillen as an A-list star in comics, so I've kept an open mind hoping to see what I've been missing.

Turns out this is the kind of work they must have been talking about. In no way does this Fear Itself tie-in feel like filler for the Event, nor does it seem like a book I'd have put on the deathwatch list. In fact, this focus on the young/reborn Loki is good enough that I'd even *recommend* it to non-Thor readers. The plot is clever without ever veering towards precious, and the characterizations are actually multi-dimensional. The dialogue is absolutely cut from the same cloth as all the best/most faithful Asgardian tales (thees and thous aplenty), but amazingly doesn't feel stilted, awkward or like it's somehow a cover for a writer who doesn't actually have any idea how to naturally express how characters of majesty could relate to one another. And I'm extra-pleased that Gillen has a few good touches of humour here and there to keep it from being way too sombre, and which reels me right back in to the story.

As in the best Loki tales, it's impossible to tell what Loki's true motives or personality are - evil, true-hearted, mischievous, impulsive, confused, jealous or self-sacrificing. I'm thrilled to find out that Gillen is capable of this kind of storytelling, since I can now add his name to my list of authors I'd actively seek out. I was always uncomfortable with disliking someone who other creators seemed to hold in high regard, though I'll always have my own quirky tastes.

I think what amazes me more than anything about writing like this is the ability of the creators to come up with a plot so intricate and well-played, so that the surprises come early and often. It's a pleasure to see intricate plans that play out so well-orchestrated, and while it's a writer's conceit that anything could come together even as well as this, that's one of the reasons we escape into fiction in the first place (because our own lives are someday and full of unrealised ambitions).

The art is terribly good - more painterly than the clean, evenly-shaded stuff of late, and conveys very well

the sense of action and movement that inhabits the between-panel places.

Will says

If someone told me I'd be reading about Thor and Loki a year ago I would have laughed myself silly.

However... Kieron Gillen is that wonderful mix of nerd and storyteller that can pick up a set of characters, blow off the dust and make them work again.

So. Old Loki is dead, new Loki is a kid. Why does this work? Why is this funny?

It works because Kid Loki has no magic, and no power other than his wits. He doesn't even have the ossified hatred and habits that his old self does, and he's free to work out his own relationships as a result (although his complaints about being held responsible for the acts of his previous incarnation are both hilarious and sad -- the first assassination attempt happens a few pages in). His family is able to take him under their wing, and Loki is able to see them as friends, mentors and even role models.

So it's not a story about men in tights beating each other up. It's a story of the prodigal son returned. The reformed addict trying to make good. Everyone involved is keenly aware of Loki's past evil, and Loki's in the horrible position of having his strengths be his weaknesses -- the more he uses his innate genius and trickster ways to save his friends and family, the more his friends and family worry about him falling into bad habits.

And of course he's a horribly conceited little snot. Nothing quite as annoying as a smart ass kid.
Recommended.

J'aime says

I've always been a fan of superhero movies and TV shows, but beyond a few graphic novels adapted from traditional novels, I haven't really read comics before now. After seeing the blockbuster film "The Avengers", I wanted more of those characters. However, I was uncertain where to begin since Marvel has 60+ years of existing history and continuity. So, I decided to start with Thor since I at least had familiarity with the Norse myths he is derived from (and yeah, I LOVE Loki). And, I went to Wikipedia. I learned that after major events like House of M, Civil War/Dark Reign and Siege, the Marvel universe had been reimagined. Specifically, the Aesir gods had broken a cycle with a final Ragnarok, instigated by the supervillain Loki, and been reborn. And Thor found Loki as a child and, inexplicably, chose to bring him back to the newly built Asgard. That is where Journey into Mystery, Volume 1 begins, with "kid Loki".

I have to say I loved the story! Not only is the child Loki a fun and captivating protagonist, but he is an imaginative and still faithful interpretation of the character. Here is the trickster, the mischief-maker, of mythology that is not yet an outright villain. And, Gillen perfectly captures the voice of a young teen boy. Certainly Loki would be as smart-ass, but so would any other 13-15 year old boy (about the age I'd judge the character to be). Add to this the fact that everyone in Asgard remembers the previous incarnation of Loki, that nearly destroyed the world, and this boy's life is challenging to say the least. In Volume 1, Loki learns how he came to be reincarnated (a clever twist worthy of a god), but also goes on an adventure to save not only Asgard, but the older brother who is the only person who does not hate him - Thor.

The art in the book is vibrant and stunning. I love how the characters are rendered, and the backgrounds are rich and detailed. The art not only complemented the story, it helped with clarity and flow. The volume also concluded with a "recap" of the Thor storyline that lead to the events of JiM, V1. This was a nice addition to help newcomers find their footing. This book is a good place for a newcomer to comics to dive into the Marvel universe, and especially for fans of Loki. But be prepared to continue the investment. I enjoyed this so much I immediately ordered volumes 2-4. And, it hooked me enough that I have several Thor omnibus collections on my wishlist, as well as Siege. I think it won't be long before I have to add another bookshelf just for my Marvel graphic novels. Highly recommended!

P. Kirby says

Yep, even though I've been spoiled and know where the story's going, I "ship" Loki and Leah. Sigh.

So...previously in Marvel-Thor-verse, Loki made friends with the nicest people (Doom, Norman Osborn, etc.) and merrily wrecked havoc on Asgard and beyond, until, when things were at their direst, the world was a nose hair from becoming a rubble-filled parking lot, he seemingly had a change of heart and sacrificed himself, saving the day.

Loki, of course, is harder to eradicate than a case of clap in a whorehouse, so he was then reincarnated, as a younger, possibly less-evil version of himself; Thor found him and brought him home once again to try and play happy family. (Yeah, Thor's learning curve is really steep.)

Most of Asgard, of course, isn't happy to have Loki again in their midst, even a cuter, twee version, so the only thing keeping kid Loki alive is a vow, made by the Warriors Three, to keep Loki from harm. This detail being somewhat important, because events will transpire to make it so that Thor isn't around to do the protective big brother thing.

But first Loki, being a typical teen with too much time on his hands (when he's not discovering that the internet is made of porn), wanders off, solves a series of puzzles and finds his older, deader self. Young Loki asks ghostly Loki the question on everyone's mind. Why did Loki do it?

Senior Loki, like all old guys, blathers on for a while, but his answer can be summarized as: "I was bored." Or maybe, "I was worried that I was getting boring."

Dead Loki also observes that even without his chaos-loving self around, evil will still be hankering to kick puppies, eviscerate unicorns and cancel all rainbows for eternity. Following this encounter with his less-alive self, young Loki has a new sense of purpose -- to save Asgard from the latest threat -- and an avian "advisor" named Ikol.

Evil, in this story arc, is played by The Serpent, whose nefarious plans include using Earth to fuel a war against Asgard.

In the face of this adversary, Odin goes into, "Screw the mortals, we're saving our immortal bacon," mode, pretty much declaring he'll raze Earth to save Asgard. Thor objects because he's sort of fond of mortals. For which, Odin --whose time in Limbo playing Groundhog Day over and over, smiting Surtur the demon, has made him a touch grumpy -- chucks Thor into Asgard lockup. (Odin, like all father-figure gods, is a petty asshole, and none-too-bright, given that he's just decommissioned one of Asgard's greatest warriors.)

Hence, it's up to kid Loki to be the hero and this time he'd prefer a plan that didn't involve his inglorious death. But first he has to escape Volstagg's misguided attempt at babysitting (which involves putting Loki to work cleaning up after Thor's goats). Naturally, this doesn't stop resourceful Loki from sneaking about the realms, unleashing Hel hounds, and fomenting discord between Mephisto and Hela. (Also, getting kneed in the balls by a pretty girl.)

All in the service of protecting Asgard from itself.

Though he retains an insatiable desire to get into mischief, teen Loki is more inquisitive than malicious, his attempts at evil self-mocking: "I'm extraordinarily evil and I want to destroy Asgard or something like that." He's also amusingly squeamish, making "Ick" and "Gross" noises at the few gory moments in the story. Given Thor's convenient state of incarceration, interactions between this Loki and Thor are few, but totally adorable.

The sort of painterly look of the artwork adds to the story's mythical sensibilities.

Four stars to allow for what I hope is further awesomeness in later volumes. *Wanders off to dig change out of sofa cushions to buy the next book.*
