



Fear Itself

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In this time of global anxiety, economic turmoil and mass hysteria, Sin, the new Red Skull, has made an awesome discovery - a revelation that will divide father and son, turn friend against friend and herald the rise of Fear personified. Who is the Serpent? As Odin and the Asgardians leave the Earth to fend for itself, the Avengers and the world's remaining heroes battle the unstoppable tide of terror! And then - the Serpent's Hammers fall! Who shall rise up and join the Serpent as the Worthy, living avatars of his evil? And how can the Avengers respond...to fear itself? Matt Fraction and Stuart Immonen bring fans the biggest Marvel event since *Civil War*!

Collecting: *Fear Itself: 1-7, Book of the Skull*

Fear Itself Details

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Author : Matt Fraction (Writer) , Stuart Immonen (Penciler) , Wade Von Grawbadger (Inker) , Laura Martin (Colourist) , Chris Eliopoulos (Letterer) , Ed Brubaker (Writer) , Scot Eaton (Penciler) , Mark Morales (Inker) , more... Sunny Gho (Colourist) , Joe Caramagna (Letterer) , Larry Molinar (Colourist) , Dexter Vines (Inker) , Justin Ponsor (Colourist) , Matt Milla (Colourist) ...less

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From Reader Review Fear Itself for online ebook

Sam Quixote says

Another year, another Marvel comics event. The concept this time around? Odin's brother has become free for the first time in centuries from his underwater cell and with the help of eight magical weapons, he turns heroes into super-villains with the power to destroy the Earth! Avengers! Assemble!

It's not the best setup given its just superheroes fighting for the entire book. The good guys sustain some losses, a couple of major characters die (but you know they'll be back, as ever), but eventually the bad guys will lose. So what's entertaining about this book? Not much unfortunately. Lots of hammy dialogue from the villain ("now I will rule the Earth, kneel before me!" etc.etc), Cap's shield breaks (but is soon replaced) and there are "dark" versions of Hulk, Thing, and a few others who fight the good guys, but fight scenes don't make for a very gripping read, they just look cool on the page.

The problem is there isn't much substance here. The idea doesn't really allow for much leeway as the only real person who can defeat this ultimate creature is Thor so we have to wait until Thor steps up before the book is over. Meanwhile it's the other superheroes who're checking their watches and doing the usual superhero nonsense.

Strangely, the interesting stuff happens in the epilogue. I won't give away what happens but Hulk's storyline is fascinating and one I definitely want to read. "Fear Itself" though? Unless you're a die-hard Marvel fan it's not something you'd want to read either. Unless fight scene upon fight scene and predictable endings are your bag in which case this book has both in abundance.

Aaron says

I was so disappointed by this crossover. I mean, it isn't terrible by any means. The action is nearly constant and escalates very well. The stakes are incredibly high, and actually FEEL high this time around. I genuinely felt like any single hero could die in this fight. It's just, the idea behind it is so good, and I just felt the premise itself was completely squandered in favor of a ton of punching.

The setup is this: Odin's evil brother, "The Serpent," has awakened after a millennia-long imprisonment beneath the ocean. When he awakens, he summons 7 hammers to earth, each to be wielded (somewhat unwillingly) by 7 heroes or villains, who represent 7 different types of fear. Now, supposedly, the arrival of these 7 fearmongers is supposed to send everyone on earth into a state of mass hysteria, but I just never really got the feeling that actually happened. Mostly, people seem scared of the fact that a bunch of hammer monsters are rampaging around the planet smashing things, which, duh. Anyone would be scared of that. What I would've liked even the slightest explanation for, though, is why everyone who is not being attacked by hammer men is supposedly fearful.

We get no sense that fear is actually spreading. We see very few riots, though people mention that riots are happening. We don't see, up close, how any real people are affected by this fear. The title of the book is "Fear Itself." You'd figure we get at least a few scenes about how and why people are afraid.

Additionally, we don't ever actually see the hammer wielders embody their respective states of fear. They all

just hit shit with hammers and kill people. And the heroes, such as Ben Grimm, who become unwilling hammer-havers, don't seem to have to deal with any of the consequences of their actions.

As for the overall plot, there are a ton of logical leaps just for the sake of moving forward. At the beginning of the book, Odin is wildly, insanely unreasonable, hiding himself and all of the Asgardians in outer space and refusing to help humanity. He even imprisons Thor for refusing to follow his orders. Then, for pretty much no reason, he changes his mind and lets Thor go back to earth to fight. Then, again for no explainable reason, he again changes his mind and decides to help humanity by giving them 7 of their own magical weapons to combat the hammer-wielders.

This is also not followed through on. There's this entire subplot about Tony Stark creating these magic weapons, and then once he has the weapons, there is ZERO CLIMAX. He just pops back to earth, doles the weapons out (we don't even get explanations for what they are or what they do), and then there's a huge fight.

Now, yes, the plot sucks. It's got a lot of typical crossover problems and isn't developed. But man, I just can't get over Stuart Immonen's art. I think the sheer pace of the story coupled with his artwork is what kept me from hating this. Everything looks crisp and polished, but with its own distinct, superheroic style. I think I could read anything that looked like this.

So, ultimately, while this isn't the best crossover event I've read, it's also not the worst. I think that distinction still goes to Shadowland. But it's also really only worth reading if you want to stay up-to-date with Thor and/or massive superhero throwdowns.

Terence says

Something has Odin spooked. Spooked enough he's ready to beat Thor

and destroy the Earth. An ancient powerful enemy known as The Serpent has returned. He is armed with magic hammers that possess fighters with the spirits of fallen warriors.

So I'm not sure if I didn't like this because I don't care for Asgardians or if it's because the general story was lacking. This was the general the world is ending, *what will we do?!* I'm so indifferent that I don't really have anything good or bad to say. Despite appearing in every fighting sequence Wolverine only has one sentence of dialogue.

Fear Itself emphasizes why many people groan about major crossover events.

2.5 out of 5 stars

James DeSantis says

Rushed event feels...rushed.

SO Thor gets told he can't defend the mortals and his father whoops his butt and takes him back to Asgard.

Then Sin (Red skull's daughter) finds the hidden weapon her father summoned years ago. A Hammer that gives her massive power. With it she also gives it to Hulk and The Thing and more to join her evil army. Thus the big fight begins of people dressed in big armor fighting with huge overweight weapons.

Good: The art is pretty solid throughout and there's some really solid moments of badassness. One with Bucky and another with Thor versus Hulk AND The Thing.

Bad: The storyline is all over the place. It feels extremely rushed. Deaths don't seem to stick at all. The fights basically just happen over and over without any character moment.

Yeah, it's basically one big event, like mostly, but really doesn't do much character development. We can do better. A 2 out of 5.

Jesse A says

I liked this a lot. Some of the dialogue was iffy but the art was good. I'm a big Thor fan so it was a pretty easy sell for me.

Sesana says

There's both good and bad here. As far as crossover events, it's probably a solid B+. Not bad, not bad at all.

Probably the worst thing about this event is just how thin it feels. Obviously, a lot of the important stuff has been farmed out to other titles, and it feels that way reading this. Probably inevitable, let's be honest, and not really something I hold against a big event. But it could feel more cohesive and less fragmented.

There's a lot of action, and very little substance. Big deaths with no emotional resonance. But then there's a very real sense of hopelessness, of our heroes and, by extension, the rest of humanity, being very much in over their heads. And then there's Tony sacrificing his sobriety to gain an audience with Odin so he can tell him off and demand access to his forges. That's good stuff.

So far, I've read two tie-in books for this event, Journey into Mystery: Fear Itself and Fear Itself: Avengers. Both were actually good, but if you read this book without also reading the Journey into Mystery component, you're honestly missing out. But Gillen's entire run on that book is a good read, so go for it.

Mike says

Brubaker's writing on the prologue is positively awful - just riddled with cliched dialogue, and the art isn't much better. I should say the colouring is bad, though the pencils/inks are decent.

After a few issues of repetitive face-pounding on all sides (boy does that get old), and one significant "death", the climax finally starts to build - we finally get to see something new happen, and original dialogue get spoken. And I find myself excited at the climax (and new premise - a weapon for each Avenger - what will each of our beloved heroes earn that suits them? How will this glean insight into their true nature?)

I noticed the reference to Captain America leading a "militia", and I couldn't help think back to the overblown controversy over the Captain America/tea party militia storyline of a couple years back. This felt a little forced, but I'll allow it as it seems to suit the moment.

The wrap-up feels a little tidy, but then it's a Marvel Event and if you just wait a few months there'll be another one to shake things up again (for a short while).

Can I rave for a moment about the art? As much as the story isn't mind-blowing, the art does its very best to look bigger than life, creative and fun. The lines are heavy and the colours are juicy and dazzling.

Here are my plot notes because I can never remember who when and what, when I'm reading later books: (view spoiler)

Kemper says

As President Franklin Roosevelt famously said, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself. Oh, but if the Red Skull's daughter Sin resurrects an ancient Asgardian called the Serpent who launches a worldwide campaign of terror and destruction that even all the Marvel superheroes can't stop, it's OK to be afraid then because you're pretty much screwed."

Here we've got another giant crossover from Marvel, and it's actually got some good moments in it thanks to writer Matt Fraction. There's interesting stuff with Thor and Odin, and it also brings about the moment we all knew was coming when Steve Rogers once again assumes the role of Captain America. There's also a real element of despair in this one with even Cap losing hope that they can win the fight. And it was great to see Tony Stark mouthing off to Odin and demanding access to the workshops of Asgard so he can forge some weapons.

If this was a self-contained mini-series, it could have been great because the problem with crossovers like this is that so much of the other parts play out in the character's individual books so that you'd have to read about 3000 comics to get the entire story. While the *Fear Itself* books give you the major beats, it feels like you're missing a lot unless you've read all the individual character books.

Even the events that are supposed to be the most shocking or dramatic don't feel like they have enough weight. There's just not enough time and space in these books to pay off the big moments so we have to settle for big splash panels and then rush off to the next fight. (view spoiler) Plus, the character deaths and destruction of an iconic object in the Marvel universe don't mean much when you know that everything will go right back to the way it's always been before too much time passes.

Jeff says

When Jack Kirby was involved with Marvel back in the sixties, he (and Stan Lee) explored various mythologies and greatly expanded on the Norse stuff for the Thor stories. I think in some ways this mega-multi book crossover is a tribute to those days. It involves Odin, Thor, Asgard and the Serpent, Odin's brother.

Be forewarned about this collection, although the story telling is fairly linear (for mega-multi book crossovers), this is only the bare bones story. A lot of the developing plotlines, especially those involving the enchanted hammers, go nowhere. They probably (read: hopefully) get picked up in the other *Fear Itself* books. The battle at the end also comes off half-baked. Maybe it's expanded upon in another volume.

Is it me or does The Watcher, as depicted here, resemble the creepy babydoll from *Toy Story 3*?

Petergquiaquinta says

I haven't been able to finish a real book in over a month, so I read this instead. Sue me...

Now I don't really have time to keep up with what's going on in the Marvel Universe, but I can tell you this at least: Asgard has crashed into the middle of Oklahoma, and it's making a big mess.

And apparently someone at Marvel has resurrected the old *Journey into Mystery* title from back in the day, and I like that because it had some interesting content when I was a kid, and I always loved the name.

But the whole new storyline seems kind of lame to me: Loki somehow is transformed into a child and the writing just isn't that good. I read another collection from this new storyline in hardback, and I found myself skipping around and flipping through...it just wasn't that well done.

Fear Itself is a little better, but not much. There's a Ragnarok scenario which all comes together way too quickly without being played out the way it should. Apparently today's comics readers don't have much of a long-term attention span, if they ever did. But I'd suggest something like Ragnarok could use a little more build up. Anyway, it turns out the Midgard Serpent is Odin's brother (which isn't the way that should go, but whatever), and if you know anything about Norse mythology, that's who Thor will be killed by. And he dies at the end. So sorry for the spoiler, but everyone knows the Midgard Serpent kills Thor, even Thor himself...and that's why, what with this dark sense of futility and loss hanging over the tales of the Norse gods, their stories are so much cooler than those of the toga-clad sissies from warmer southern climes.

What would be really cool would be if Marvel kept Thor dead, kind of like Captain Marvell, the only superhero who ever really died. But if Thor isn't already back as I write this, I'm sure he will be soon enough because there's way too much movie tie-in money to make at the moment.

But if you want to read something much better that plays with the idea of the Norse gods and Ragnarok and ties in a bunch of other mythological storylines, try Neil Gaiman's *American Gods*. You won't be sorry...

Malum says

Maybe 2.5 stars.

This one is a hard one to review. I didn't love it, and yet I can't really pinpoint what's wrong with it. There are lots of heroes, but no one is really given time to shine here. Really, this whole event just seems like an excuse to give everybody "kewl" magic weapons and armor and have them beat the hell out of each other for a bit.

There are a few important deaths that may have been impactful at the time, but reading it now you know these people all came back shortly after this and so the impact is greatly diminished. Also, how many times has Asgard had to face a Ragnarok event? At least four now, isn't it? Talk about going back to the same well over and over Marvel...

My favorite part is when Thor admits that he would never be able to beat Hulk (that's right, you go Hulk!).

So, basically, if you want to see some heroes and villains with some new looks, then this might be worth checking out. If you skip it, though, you won't be missing much.

Nicolo Yu says

Fear Itself was a major crossover event that **Siege** was not. Seven issues by Matt Fraction and Stuart Immonen, plus a lengthy epilogue that was also a miniseries. Like **Siege**, it was a Thor-centric story given that the villain had a vague Norse origin and his avatars have faux Asgardian Kirbyesque design. It was definitely a retelling of the Ragnarok cycle, something Walter Simonson did twice in his legendary run on *Thor*. **Fear Itself** centered on the part of myth where Thor battles the Serpent and for those who know their Norse sagas, that is spoiler enough.

I enjoyed this story and because of its epic scope it needed a miniseries and it tie-ins to be told. **Fear Itself** focused on the Avengers trinity of Captain America, Thor and Iron Man. Each got their moments of heroism and sacrifice; a high price to pay for a war they possibly couldn't win. The best moment was when Captain America, with his shield broken into shards, picks up the fallen hammer of Thor and helped rally their ragged forces.

Anthony says

I remember when this came out in 2011, and I fully brought into the hype behind it. At the time I was very invested in marvel comics and I'd just discovered Matt Fraction and Stuart Immonen as creators, so I was excited for the event.

Reading it now, 6 years later, I still really enjoy it. I think the problem it had at the time is that it was being built as a big marvel universe event, when I think it's better read as a Thor story that also includes the other Avengers.

I've recently been rereading a lot of Thor from that period. JMS Thor followed by Gillens run (and the Siege storyline) and then onto Fractions, and this is better when it's read as part of that.

Now, if you wanted, you could go further since there are many tie-ins with a lot of books (and some of them are good), but at its core it's about Thor and Odin and the Serpent.

But that brings me to my main problem with the book - the villain. I don't think there's enough backstory here to really make you care about him at all, which leads to the story suffering. Like if there weren't so many cool moments drawn by Immomen with Thor taking on The Worthy, the rating would be a lot lower. He's not a good enough villain for the story and definitely an event.

P Fosten says

Well, this was...interesting. I stayed away from this on its original release in early to mid 2011 as there were too many tie-ins and it seemed too big. This UK collection contains the prologue by Brubaker and Eaton and the original 7 issue main series by Fraction and Immomen but NOT the additional 3 part epilogue (more on that later).

The prologue is an a typical example of Modern 21st Century Big 2 comics. It's a well crafted tale and the art is okay but it's tied into an ongoing narrative (not just of this crossover but the Marvel universe as a whole) and as such not much happens. I'm sure this probably started the tidal wave of online negativity towards this series because of that.

As for the main series, well, except for one bit where something unfortunate happens to Captain America that isn't especially clear (and I'm not entirely sure that's not down to a missing page or two) the art by Stuart Immomen and Inker Wade von Grawbadger is fantastic. It looks big and epic. The panels filled with energy and the storytelling clear. Stuart Immomen has been doing this for 20 odd years and just keeps getting better.

Now for the meat, the story by Matt Fraction. I've seen other commentary liken this to DC comics 'Legends' series from 1986. In terms of the one line 'Elevator pitch' then yes, it's very similar. But that's no bad thing. It's a big theme of 'What happens when the world loses faith in superheroes?'. The only concern is that Marvel have trotted this out as subtext across many of the events and follow ups in the last few years (Civil War, Secret Invasion, Dark Reign) so it's not new.

The set-up is OK (Odin's brother escapes and begins and reign of terror designed to power him up enough to destroy the Nine worlds of Norse myth, Odin plans to destroy Earth to deprive him of his power source) and the underlying theme of what people will do when they are afraid comes through strongly. Most of these big events struggle a bit to have a discernible through-line but this one stands out. The pacing holds up reasonably well, justifying the 7 issue run and the beats land in the right places although in some respects this becomes predictable. By the time a certain character meets his unexpected fate, you know where this is going and when it will hit.

I mostly enjoyed it but it missed out on a better rating due to a few problems. First, plot logic. The Serpent's (Odin's brother) plan is to inspire terror by killing everything. Well, yes, while you're killing people the rest will be afraid but once everyone's dead no one will be feeling anything to power you up. And Odin's counter plan to destroy Earth (driven by fear of the Serpent fulfilling a prophecy involving Thor) would surely inspire more fear and power the serpent even more. Little things like that crop up as potholes in an otherwise

flat road and when you hit it you notice. One of the bad guys (Grey Gargoyle) isn't introduced and doesn't have any panel time actually doing anything as well. I gather that was covered in an Iron Man tie in.

Second, Character logic. Matt Fraction has obviously spent a lot of time working this. As I said before the theme is clear, much clearer than most other comics. But sometimes too clear. Spider-man has a moment of clarity after a big fight and 'quits' to find his family instead being part of the counter attack. You know where this is going even before it happens. He'll find May Parker and she'll inspire him to act on the 'Great Responsibility' he carries and rejoin the fight. That's fine. I've seen it argued that it's cliche, but thematically it works. What I don't like is that the set-up for that is abrupt coming out of nowhere. Perhaps it was set-up in a tie-in comic reprinted elsewhere, but I don't know that. If so, a note in panel to tell me there was more to this story somewhere else would have helped. There are a couple of things like going on. Again pot holes in an otherwise flat track.

Third, target audience. I'm going to have to sidebar for a bit on this. I do read comics regularly but not everything and sometimes in reprint months after the fact. I bought this in a bookstore and not from a comic shop. It's racked with a limited number of others. This is not a book that you can just pick up and read without extensive knowledge. As a long term reader, I know Tony Stark has a drink problem. Therefore I get that when he sacrifices his sobriety to gain an audience with Odin it is 'A BIG THING (tm)'. But I'm not a current reader so I have no idea if he's fallen off the wagon already. And if I were not a long term reader I'm not sure the significance would hit. There are some moments like that also.

Last, endings and epilogues. The actual ending of the story is fine. The Serpent is defeated with an appropriate sacrifice and our heroes pick up the pieces. And then it doesn't stop. I understand that as presented in a monthly form, the series was designed to launch a number of new titles, all of which get an epilogue here. The problem is they are all designed to set up conflicts and mysteries in their own titles and so are all cliffhanger endings. Meaning you finish the book without the story feeling done. Marvel seems to do this a lot and on a serialized basis I get why. But it doesn't necessarily encourage anyone to pick up another book. DC are much better at putting out stories that have a sense of closure to it.

In short, it's enjoyable enough but don't pay full price for it.

Chelsea says

2.5 stars

Ugh.... *sighs heavily*. Well, kids, I've put this off for so long. I skipped right over it and went to Avengers v. X-Men when I was on my events kick and I don't regret that. This is mediocre, if I'm being nice.

It's hard for me to pinpoint what exactly didn't work for me with this book. It had the key elements for an event I like: Steve, Tony, Thor all alive and on pretty okay terms with each other. A writer I love (Fraction) and some fantastic art. It was even at a time when the Avengers lineups had my faves (Carol, Luke, Danny, the Jessicas). Bruce was even around! But alas, this was only a step above Secret Invasion and that is not a compliment, trust me.

The Good:

- The art is lovely! Honestly, I loved the way Steve, Thor, Nat and Tony were drawn in this comic. It's not often artists care to draw characters that are supposed to be larger as larger. I know that sounds like no big

deal but when you draw Thor just as large as Steve, that's inaccurate. In order of smallest to largest, it's Danny > Tony > Bucky > Steve > Thor > Hulk.

- The teamwork here is pretty great. I loved seeing Clint attempt to hold things together. There was a cute moment between Jess and Carol. Steve, Tony and Thor working together was lovely to see

- The Thor and Loki stuff was great! Honestly, Journey Into Mystery's tie ins were so wonderful that I just wanted to read that instead of this.

- The stuff with Cap getting back into the suit and then getting frustrated with Odin was pretty cool to see.

The Bad:

- Where were the women? I think Jess, Carol, Sif, Betty and Nat all had like 2 lines each. And one of those was Natasha screaming "Take this!" or something in a battle. Even Sin, who started out as a bigger character, dwindles into nothing as the series goes on.

- Even having finished the book... I'm at a loss as to what exactly went on here. The Serpent, Odin's brother, decides to wreck earth for reasons and he does that by inciting fear and riots all over earth.

- I'm not entirely sure why this didn't work on everyone. Especially the heroes. There's a Spider-Man tie in that shows Peter was also scared but... why was he less affected?

- The villains were all pretty unremarkable to me. I don't remember any of spirits that possessed the heroes. I'm sure they might have larger roles in tie ins but, you can't rely solely on your readers reading all 86 tie ins. It's idiotic. (And I'm still working my way through them)

- At times, the dialogue seemed out of character.

- Danny Rand calls someone a "skank". What?

- I understand Steve isn't always all "Golly Gee" but it seemed odd to see him with a military rifle and shouting "Son of a bitch". Ults Steve would definitely do that but maybe I missed the 616 Cap comic where he did that.

*** spoilers ***

(view spoiler)

(hide spoiler)]

So overall, this is not a recommend from me. Read Bendis' Avengers run, Herc and Journey Into Mystery instead. This was just... boring, bland, and not that exciting.
