

This question is addressed to all writers of new series who decide to join in on a crossover event: why? Why in the world would you do that to yourselves? It's already tough enough to be held accountable to the story you signed up for; why would you saddle yourself with someone else's? The answer, most likely, is to snatch a few extra readers dazzled by the sheer spectacle of a Big Two Event, even at the cost of goodwill with the title's actual fans. While Ewing has handled his Axis tie-ins more deftly than most, there's no denying that the overall tone and direction of the series has been thrown largely off-course. We all remember how this title was originally about Loki doing 007-like missions for the All-Mother, right? Loki hasn't done anything like that since he captured (and subsequently freed) Lorelei, in #4. Like Cyclops, it just seems a tad early for such a new title to be losing its way. Still, Ewing does manage to reappropriate Axis' otherwise dreadful premise (everyone evil turns good, everyone good turns evil!) to play out the series' longest running conflicts: Loki's desire to change. Thanks to Axis, he gets his wish—or does he? That he wants to escape his doom as an eternal villain is clear, but that doesn't necessarily mean he wants to be the insufferable do-gooder he is now. Heroically swooping in to save a casino from a gang of juggling-themed super villains—you heard right—is great, but lording his newfound nobleness over everyone else is less so. Worse still, he claims that these changes have left him absolved. And I feel no guilt," not even for the admittedly tiresome "crime that won't be forgiven." Yet it's that guilt which has made his current incarnation sympathetic and human; losing it makes him as one-dimensional and alien as the god of evil he used to be. Despite being aware of the alterations wrought by Axis, Loki fails to realize that changing for good doesn't mean changing for the better. He starts on the right track ("If the evil in us has become good...you don't suppose the good in us has..."), but new ladylove and co-reformer Amora stops him before he gets where he needs to go ("...Has become better, silly."). Anyway, we all know the situation is temporary. A world where everyone has switched their moral affiliation may be interesting as a parallel universe-type deal—Earth-3, anyone?—but not one we want to see applied to the world we know. Besides, all Axis does is take from Loki his freedom to determine who he wants to be, as effectively as the All-Mother and Future Loki were doing before. It's disturbing, however, to see Future Loki continuing to mock his younger counterpart despite the radical changes. Changing his future, it seems, will be no simple matter. Though fully drawn into the Axis storyline, Ewing manages to retain most of the title's original character, which is intentionally broad and campy. The aforementioned juggling-themed heroes, the Death Throws, are a joke on a lot of levels, one that works only because Ewing wisely exposes their massive silliness just long enough to startle you into laughing, but without testing your patience. That timing lets Ewing get away with a lot of gags that on paper seem too outrageous to work, like Loki turning into an actual unicorn as he gallops away, crying, "For pureness of heart...is the greatest magic of all!" Garbett's art gamely goes along with Ewing's comedic aspirations, though it's a bit like your typical SNL host: enjoying the joke without necessarily giving it the delivery that will knock it out of the park. Seeing a defused bomb bounce off the head of the Death Throws' newest recruit, the stilt-walking Throwdown, is funny enough to elicit a smile, but not much of a laugh. Occasionally, Ewing throws in an idea too wacky to not work, like Loki's unicorn transformation, but mostly the art stays out of the comedy's way rather than helps it along. Some Musings: - I'm not sure that "bitchy" is the most accurate word to describe Loki, but it may nonetheless still be the best. The post *Loki: Agent of Asgard #8* appeared first on *Weekly Comic Book Review*.

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