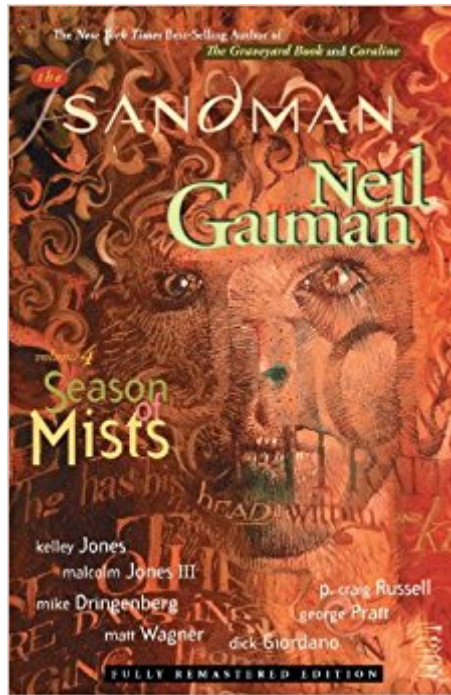


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The Sandman, Vol. 4: Season Of Mists



Synopsis

Volume Four of New York Times best selling author Neil Gaiman's acclaimed creation, with updated coloring and new trade dress. Ten thousand years ago, Morpheus condemned a woman who loved him to Hell. Now the other members of his immortal family, The Endless, have convinced the Dream King that this was an injustice. To make it right, Morpheus must return to Hell to rescue his banished love and Hell's ruler, the fallen angel Lucifer, has already sworn to destroy him.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Neil Gaiman's artistic exploration of sin and redemption in Sandman: Season of Mists is a wonderful example of the literary excellence that can be achieved with a graphic novel format. Gaiman blends traditional literary techniques, surreal art, and evocative storytelling in order to create a unique work of literature. Sandman is a seventy-five issue comic book series which follows Morpheus, a divine being known also as Sandman, as he explores the dreams of humanity and deals with other divine creatures in order to better understand mankind. Season of Mists, the third story arc in the series, begins with the Sandman, Lord of Dreams, journeying into Hell in order to forgive a woman he condemned nearly ten thousand years ago. Things quickly become complicated, however, when Lucifer decides to resign as king of Hell, and leaves the Sandman with the key to his kingdom. As the story progresses, the Sandman finds himself debating what to do with an empty Hell, as well as contemplating what it would mean to forgive the woman he condemned. Gaiman writes the above story in a poetic narrative that incorporates a variety of literary techniques. The divine beings the

Sandman encounters speak in an almost musical pattern that uses a lot of alliteration, and one scene, in which the Sandman speaks to a group of historical writers, is even written completely in iambic pentameter. The style works extremely well, since it also serves as an allusion to the poetic works of Shakespeare (who even makes a brief appearance in the tale), Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and John Milton's poem *Paradise Lost*, all of which are classic literary works that explore similar themes of sin and redemption. The majority of Gaiman's literary techniques, however, are incorporated into the story through the art. Most of the figurative language, such as metaphors, allusions, and imagery are made literal by the visible depictions of characters and locations. In one scene, all the divine beings the Sandman encounters are each drawn according to the art styles of the cultures from which they originate. In another scene, we see the horrors occurring at a boarding school for troubled boys. Flip back a few pages to the depiction of Hell, and the similarities between the two locations become clear. Most effective, however, is the scene in which Lucifer congratulates God on the beauty of a sunset. The painting which accompanies the statement conveys that beauty far more effectively than words ever could. Neil Gaiman's *Sandman: Season of Mists* is a fantastical and intelligent tale that belongs in any literary collection.

The fourth book in *The Sandman Chronicles*, *Season of Mists* picks up where the second volume, *The Doll's House* left off, continuing the story of Dream and his siblings. Unlike the previous books, *Season of Mists* focuses mostly on immortals (or those close to it) rather than mortals. Only one of the chapters of the book even took place on earth, and that was dealing with the dead, not the living. Because of this slightly different format, *Season of Mists* introduced a lot of rather colorful characters. Some were the relatively familiar faces of Norse, Egyptian, and Eastern gods, angels, and demons, while others were new characters, delightful and colorful in their own way. I particularly liked the contrast of Order and Chaos and, of course, the faeries, but that was a given to anyone who knows me at all. I promise, though, I won't dwell on them here. I love Nuala, but in *Season of Mists* she really plays a very small roll. The central plot of *Season of Mists* is the abandonment of Hell. Lucifer closes it, turning out all the souls, and then gives the key to Dream to do with as he will. This, naturally proves far more complicated than it originally seems. Most of the story is concerned with the direct repercussions of this, particularly among the (relatively) immortal creatures of mythology. The result was one of the most fun chapters I've read in a long time-the chapter where they all come and present their cases to Dream, trying to win Hell for themselves. The interactions were entertaining, and the different ways that they tried to persuade Dream to give them the key to Hell, along with their reasons for wanting it and plans for it, were as varied and entertaining as they

are. I have to admit, that I was a little disappointed with the ultimate decision, and I wish that I could have known who Dream would have chosen if no one had interceded, but I do admit that the decision that was reached was the only one that could be reached. It did, however, raise an interesting point when Hell was given to its new owners and re-populated. I'm not sure that I agree that it's worse to be tortured to be redeemed and made a better person than it is to be tortured for no reason, but I can see how, with eternal torment, this might be the case. It is, after all, easier to bear unpleasant things if you can be righteously angry about them. Woven in with the main story of the "battle" for Hell, was a secondary plot line. It was, for a while, seemingly forgotten once the key to Hell was handed over to Dream, but Gaiman did not forget about it, and the conclusion to that was even more satisfying, in my opinion, than the conclusion to the main story. I was glad that Nada was not forgotten in all the distractions. I know that there is more to Season of Mists than I've gotten out of it, but I've only read it once and, like the other books in The Sandman, it is one that must be read multiple times in order to be fully appreciated. It is also a book I hope to return to sometime in the future.

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