



Keys to the Kingdom

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Joe Hill and Gabriel Rodriguez's Locke & Key unwinds into its fourth volume in Keys to the Kingdom. With more keys making themselves known, and the depths of the Locke family's mystery ever-expanding, Dodge's desperation to end his shadowy quest drives the inhabitants of Keyhouse ever closer to a revealing conclusion.

Keys to the Kingdom Details

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From Reader Review Keys to the Kingdom for online ebook

Algernon says

The series just gets better and better. In **Keys to the Kingdom** I feel the need to remark on the daring use of unconventional storytelling and experimental graphic settings. The opening issue, **Sparrow** is a particularly well executed homage to my all time favorite artist Bill Waterson and his newspaper style of small panel stories. The choice of Bode as a stand-in for the subversive Calvin is obvious to anyone familiar with the personalities of the Locke children. Here's a gem from the mouth of the adventurous kid:

@#&%!

Teenagers!

What the heck is wrong with them?!

Just when you're about to get a good snowball fight going, they have to ruin it by talking about 'relationships'!

Left to his own devices by his teenage siblings, Bode discovers yet another magical key, one that opens to him the kingdom of beasts. An amazing flight of fancy that ends in blood and tears as the Adversary of the Locke family is still plotting to bring them down.

In the next issue, **White** Kinsey and Bode investigate the past mysteries of their father's generation, with the help of another magical key, one that allows a person to change his/her appearance. The premise offers good material for an exploration of racial prejudice and identity issues.

Issue no. 3, **February**, is built on a calendar template, with each panel representing a day in the winter month. We have Tyler trying to fit in on his school's hockey team, Bode discovering new and dangerous keys, a little highschool romance drama with Kinsey playing the rebellious girl and hesitating between the dark and handsome Zack and her geeky class mates while Tyler wins and loses his girlfriend's attentions in the space of a few days. I'm starting to lose track of all the new keys and abilities among creeping sharp vines, rusty chains, mesmerizing mechanical dancers, sword-wielding squirrels and strength-enhancing amulets. The three Locke scions find out among other things that playing around with magic and bringing their friends in on the secret can have unforeseen and painful consequences.

Casualties is using a classical comic template, I believe from the 1970's, from some military-themed series that I'm unfamiliar with. Bode is assisted here by the boy Rufus, and together they discover that their make-believe game of toy soldiers is mirroring the larger conflict between the Locke family and their Adversary. The autistic Rufus has his own magical abilities of perceiving the supernatural manifestation in the mansion, among them the ghost of Sam Lesser, still haunting the halls and corridors looking for revenge against the Adversary.

Detectives, parts I and II, bring about a timely and surprising major development in the plot, so I will talk less about them. Suffice to say, I felt it was about time for some revelations and a game-changer from the interesting but repetitive experiments with new keys.

Overall, the quality of the writing and the graphical excellence show no signs of faltering after four albums, and I have high hopes from the following albums.

Miriam says

The first half was disappointingly incoherent. And what was up with those cartoony-style panels about Bode, who appears to have turned from a slightly weird, slightly dumb little boy to a very weird kid who talks like a Charles Wallace baby genius?

The second half got better. I was glad to see Rufus finally having a plot role. Ty got smarter (as one ideally does during the course of adolescence and after some rough experiences) and Kinsey got dumber (as one probably does after artificially removing parts of one's mind with a magic key). Sam's unexpected role continues.

I enjoyed it, but definitely not up to the standard of earlier installments in the series.

mark monday says

ooooo... the eeriest of rollercoaster rides, a rush of images, sinister vistas zooming in and out of view, unreal tableau cascading pell-mell, willy-nilly, hurly-burly: an homage to Bill Watterson, a bloody battle between birds and wolves; racial dismay and distortion in an insane asylum; a hockey loss, a greenhouse comes alive, sprouting wings, battling chains, battling squirrels, a death-tune, the end of friendships, battling teddy bears, battling friends, the worst way to win at hockey; an homage to EC Comics, soldiers in battle, a ghost with an agenda and an autistic child, a "philososcope"; a long-awaited confrontation, the return of a terrible tune, a terrible death, a terrible transformation... Joe Hill (brilliant writing) and Gabriel Rodriguez (brilliant art) decide to unleash everything at once and the effect is wonderfully disorienting, the carefully scattered puzzle pieces begin uniting in mad spurts, the slow pace moves into fast-forward, everything comes together, everything falls apart... my hands gripped this volume too tightly, my eyes wide, my mouth agape, my brain began to hurt...

Trudi says

2015 re-read: Closing in on the final two volumes and I can barely stand the tension. I have the day off work and am blissfully binging on the terrifying thrills and spectacular adventure that is Joe Hill's *Locke & Key* series. I'm madly in love with this wicked crazy gothic modern fairytale about a sprawling, mysterious house with forbidden secrets hiding behind locked doors and a cast of unusual keys with the power to open them.

This story works not just on a fantastical level that blows all the circuits of your imagination at once, but on an emotional level where you care and worry about the characters and grip the pages white-knuckled in total abject fear for their safety. Little Bode Locke stole my heart from the opening pages of *Welcome to Lovecraft* and I've come to adore the sweet, precocious brat even more as the series has gone on, gathering steam and momentum and magic along the way.

Tyler and Kinsey are great older siblings acting as stabilizing forces to Bode's youthful uncontrollable

exuberance and transgressions. But even Tyler and Kinsey have made mistakes that have put the entire family in the worst jeopardy. Where do we go from here? What happens next?

What is the Omega Key? And what lies behind the black door?

Eeek!

2012 review:

Outstanding!!!! I cannot wait for more! This series continues to get stronger with every installment. Since Chapter 1 "Sparrow" is dedicated to the great Bill Watterson, it is only appropriate that I express the extent of my pleasure in a happy dance thusly:

Will M. says

Amazing ending! Sort of a cliffhanger, but wow I need to read the next one right away. I've said it before, but I'm saying it again, Joe Hill can fucking write.

Aside from the ending, I liked volume 3 more than this. The story continues to develop but it lacked the depth that the last volume had. I am hating the shit out of Zack as the series goes on. The characters are really likable and they continue to grow on you.

4.5/5 stars. Still shy of a .5 but it's almost there. I want more keys.

Sam Quixote says

Hmm, not a whole lot happens in the fourth Locke & Key book: Zack/Dodge is still monotonously hunting for the Omega Key. He targets an old girlfriend of Rendell's (the Locke kids' dead dad) who recognises him, and he continues to torment Rufus, the son of the woman he's living with. Then it's a waiting game until something resembling a plot emerges in the final act. It's not really plot-driven - it's not really character-driven either! Locke & Key's "story" just kinda... floats there.

Maybe this is a detail I've forgotten from previous books, but I don't get why Zack - if he can change his sex on a whim - doesn't adopt a different face from the one he's worn for decades? You know, the one that attracts unwanted attention and damningly appears in old photos? Or why he even has a lip-ring, an easily identifiable marker? Surely everything would be easier for him if these two things were gone altogether?

Amid the waiting around, there's some clumsy social commentary on the double standard in society for whites and blacks, and some corny melodrama with Tyler's girlfriend Jordan - the kinda crap that doesn't happen outside of bad fiction. Joe Hill's also just not very good at pulling off real emotions. One scene has Tyler suddenly sobbing about his dead dad that comes out of nowhere and is unexpectedly funny!

Gabriel Rodriguez's art is fine. There's a cute Bill Watterson tribute in the first chapter where Bode becomes

a sparrow, and I liked the Jester Key design. Generally his art is good.

But, wow, what a lot of filler! A whole heckuva lot of watching the characters putz about doing nothing for page after page! I guess the fans of this series must really like the Locke kids for them to think this book is all that and a bag of chips? Not me. I was bored for much of it and only mildly interested once Hill decides to start doing things in the final 20 pages or so.

I have the whole series so I'll finish the remaining two books but this fourth volume is slow and uneventful for the most part - a tedious read that feels like Hill and Rodriguez milking their cash cow for as long as possible.

Chad says

After many attacks the kids finally figure some things out just in time for a major turn in the story. The Bill Watterson tribute issue is fantastic. I love the juxtaposition between the cartoony panels and the graphic battles in the backgrounds. There are so many great panels in the February issue where they just throw away battles between the Lockes and the Dark Lady in one panel. They could really revisit these and flesh each one out into an entire issue. They are so creative. I think that's what I like the most about this series. The amount of original creativity and thought that's gone into the entire Locke and Key series. I dread coming to the end of each volume, because that means I'm one step closer to the end of the series.

Kelly (and the Book Boar) says

Find all of my reviews at: <http://52bookminimum.blogspot.com/>

You guys are all aware of the fact that I'm an idiot, right? Yeah, I thought so. Just to confirm, I'm going to tell you a little secret. I accidentally started reading *Locke and Key* Volume 5 instead of 4 the other day. Luckily I figured out my mistake once I made it past Chapter 1 (which was a flashback). Then I started reading what I thought was *Keys to the Kingdom* only to find myself reading . . .

Calvin and Hobbes?

These allergy meds are really something! Okay, let's go with it. Welcome to *Locke and Key Volume 4: Keys to the Kingdom* Bill Watterson style . . .

Talk about a volume with freaky fast delivery. Holy moses! There is a lot of focus on "game playing" this go around with old keys like the Giant Key, as well as performing a little memory swappage with help of the

Head Key . . .

but there's also the introduction of new keys like the Animal Key that allows you to . . .

and the Herkules-Schlüssel which grants the user super strength and the ability to handily take down any opponent . . .

Also in this volume, Tyler finally begins to get wise of the whole Zack situation that culminates in a tussle of epic proportions and a cliffhangery ending that makes me soooooo thankful I have Volume 5 queued up and ready . . .

destiny ? [howling libraries] says

Funny enough, given that Volume 3 was my favorite of the series so far, Volume 4 was my *least* favorite. There was a lot of action without dialogue that made it just feel like filler material, as well as some particularly sad events that were a little bit hard to follow through the storyline.

One thing I did enjoy about this volume, however, was the opportunity it took to make fun of bigoted, racist assholes. I never get tired of that.

Series content warning: violence, sexual assault, homophobia, racism, sexism, ableism. All negative views are challenged by the text, but are very present.

Anne says

Re-read 2015

So thanks to my pal, Dan 2.0, I've had the chance not only to *finally* get my hands on the volumes of this series that I haven't been able to read, but also to do a re-read of the first four that I did manage to get my paws on back in the day.

I had forgotten how good these suckers were!

Man, Hill just takes everything and shakes it all to hell in this volume. The plot twists are just...very cool. And (this is the one great thing about losing your ability to retain information) that ending *still* managed to surprise the hell out of me.

And if you haven't read this one yet, it'll shock the shit out of you, too.
I promise.

Original Review 2012

I was skeptical of the Calvin and Hobbes artwork that started this volume off, but eventually it worked for me. Blending innocent art with the sinister going-ons in the plot definitely brought it up a notch. Again, this was excellent. *Excellent!* I can't even...And the *ending*? What?! How could you do that to me, Joe?! Gah!
Expected publication of Locke and Key, Vol. 5: Clockworks is soon, so at least I won't have to wait too long...right?

Sarah says

3.5ish stars.

The start of the volume was a bit slow but it really picked up at the end. I'm really excited now to read the next volume because that ending was crazy! The illustrations were stunning as usual.

Raeleen Lemay says

Ugh I'm not emotionally prepared for the last two volumes

THIS VOLUME WAS SO GOOD.

The plot is getting seriously nuts, and I'm terrified and excited to see where things go. I only have two volumes left to read, and I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN.

Leah says

From 5 stars to 4. I still really enjoyed this but it's slightly less awesome than I remembered.

6/16 2014

Holy shit with the ending! Why would you do this to me Joe? Why?

Wow. Just wow. If you haven't read my review of Volume 1 where I say to pick up this series and read it. Well, I'm saying it again. Read this series.

When I first opened *Keys to the Kingdom*, I wasn't a huge fan of the childlike artwork at first, but it grew on me, and it ended up working really well with the art I'm used to with this series.

The story itself though, yeah, that just keeps getting better. The plot just freaking thickens with *Keys to the Kingdom*, and I was holding on for dear life as this world that Joe Hill has created continued to come to life on the pages in front of me. Props to Gabriel Rodriguez for being able to create this world visually so well. It was just another outstanding, amazing, volume to this.

I can't believe there's only two left to go. I'm nearing the end, and I'm frightened at what there will be when I come to the end. At this point, I just have no idea if the Lockes are going to win.

Calista says

This book moves the plot forward quickly. The first chapter has a nod to Calvin and Hobbs it appears. The art is great and it can also be gorey. In this book, every chapter has a new key that does something.

It still feels like Zack is always ahead of everything and he's going to win. Yet, Bode seems to be catching on. There was a huge cliff hanger at the end. I mean I need to find out what is going to happen.

Just like with other volumes, characters die, it looks like the Locke children might get ahead and it seems that Zack is ahead. I am constantly surprised by this series. If you are into graphic novels, you should be reading this.

Jadranka says

Misim da komotno mogu i preostala dva dela ovog serijala da ocenim sa 5* bez pitanja.

Crtež i priča su u savršenom skladu, i međusobno se dopunjavaju, a svaka epizoda je bolja od prethodne.

Ocena: 5+
