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1602™

PART FIVE



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1602 *Part Five* *In Which a Treacherous Course is Plotted*

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We are in the Marvel Universe. It's 400 years ago. For reasons we do not yet understand, people and events are coming into existence at the wrong time.

Sir Nicholas Fury is the head of Queen Elizabeth's intelligence organization. Stephen Strange is her court physician. Neither of them was able to prevent the Queen's death, at the agency of Count Otto Von Doom, the ruler of Latveria.

On the continent, the Inquisition, under the leadership of the Grand Inquisitor, persecutes the Witchbreed, who look different or have unusual powers and abilities. In the past, England has offered a haven to the Witchbreed, and turned a blind eye to the activities of Carlos Javier, their leader.

But Elizabeth's death has propelled James VI of Scotland to the English throne. James has elected to blame the Queen's death on those he hates and fears. He has sent Fury to capture or kill Javier and his Witchbreed.

Fury sent his young assistant, Peter, on ahead, to warn Javier.

In Trieste, blind ballad singer Matthew Murdoch, Fury's top agent, has been betrayed by the mysterious Natasha. The Templar weapon he was sent to retrieve is now in the hands of Otto von Doom.

And all the while, strange weather phenomena threaten to destroy the world: phenomena that Stephen Strange is convinced center on the girl Virginia Dare, newly arrived with her Native American retainer, from the Roanoke Colony in the New World.

Count Otto von Doom



Natasha



The Grand Inquisitor



Petros



King James



McGoy



Grey



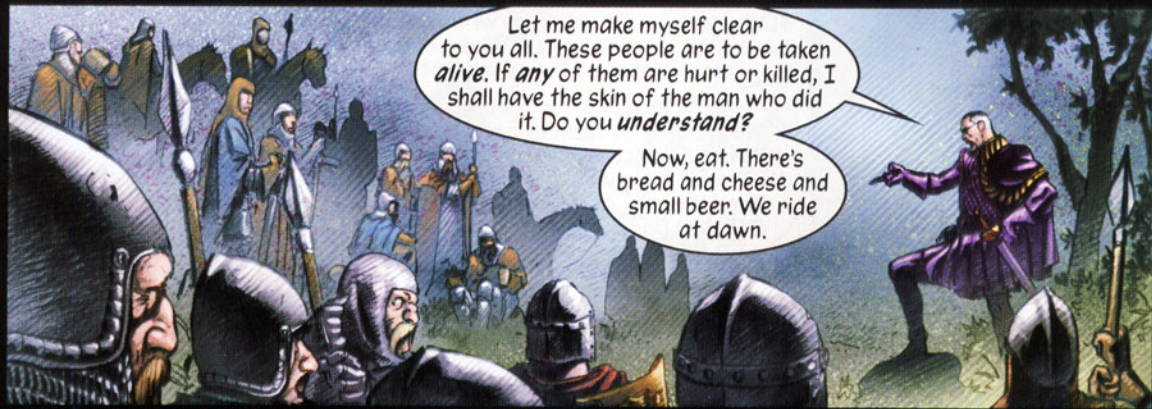
Hey, Neil, if this is the Marvel Universe, what are all the tiny dinosaurs doing?

Later, Andy.

Okayyy.

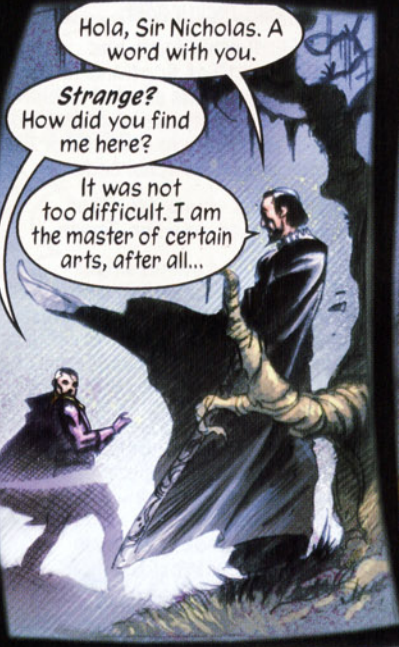
I just hope you know what you're doing.





Let me make myself clear to you all. These people are to be taken *alive*. If *any* of them are hurt or killed, I shall have the skin of the man who did it. Do you *understand*?

Now, eat. There's bread and cheese and small beer. We ride at dawn.



Hola, Sir Nicholas. A word with you.

Strange?
How did you find me here?

It was not too difficult. I am the master of certain arts, after all...



So you say, Strange. I see no magic in what you do. Merely guile and trickery. But speak your piece.

Believe me or not, yet still my arts have shown me things happening far from here.

Your agent has failed.

You lie!



I wish that I did. No, he and the old man were betrayed. They and the Templar weapon are in the hands of...

Doom.

Indeed. A most impressive guess.




Doom!

It was him who killed her majesty, I'll swear to it. He was dangerous before--now, I fear for all of us.




I was planning to take Javier into my custody, Strange. He and his creatures need to be kept safe.

Kept safe from our new king? How will you accomplish that, Sir Nicholas?




In truth, I do not know, Stephen. I am an Englishman, and I cannot betray the crown--no more than I can betray the God who places that crown on the head of the unworthy.




I hope that our new King feels as kindly towards your future health and well-being as you do about *his*, Nicholas.

I would advise you to come up with a plan, and fast. I have taken the girl, Virginia, to my house in Greenwich. She will be safer with me.



I shall concentrate on unravelling this mystery, with my magics.


I will hear no more talk of magics, you mountebank.



Fury, your ignorance is invincible, is it not?

Very well. Enough. I can hear Clea calling. It is time I broke my fast.

And your soldier will be coming with food for you--



What do you--?

Sir? Here's your bread and cheese.




Was I asleep?

Sir? No, sir...


Was there anyone here with me?

Sir Nicholas? You are scaring me...

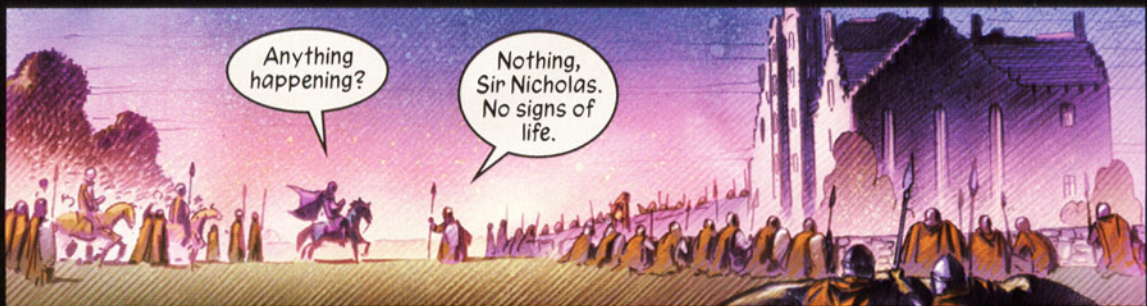


I scare myself, Dougan. Too many ghosts in the morning mist.

But nothing that cannot be exercised with bread, and with cheese, and with beer, I'll wager.



Now, tell the men to saddle up. We ride south.



Anything happening?

Nothing, Sir Nicholas. No signs of life.



Omnia Mutantur. All things change. Aye...

...but some changes are harder than I dreamed...



*Alacris & Sanguis
Fidelis Selectus
College for the Sons
of Christendom
"omnia mutantur,
nos et mutantur
in illis"*



It is I, Nicholas Fury. **Open**, in the King's name!



Peter? Are you hurt, boy?

Only my pride. And my face is a little tender.

The guard last night was a trifle overzealous.




Carlos.


Hello, Nicholas. Would you like to talk about what troubles you?

This is not the time, Carlos. So, no.

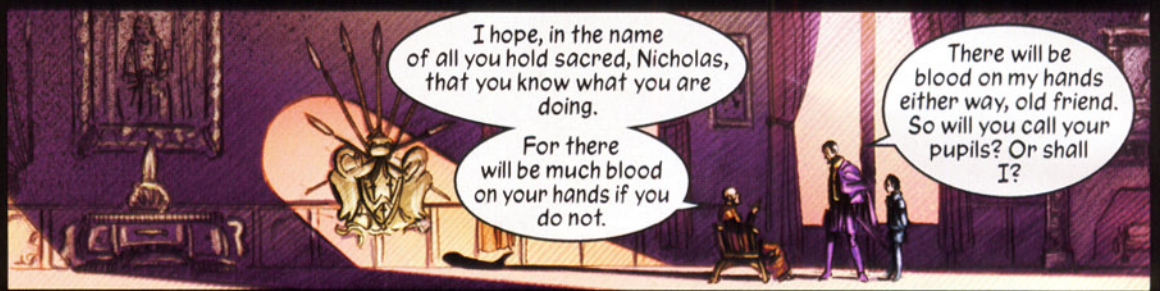
The King has sent me here to take you and your pupils captive. Will you make it easy for me, or not?



You *do* understand that if I surrender to you, Nicholas, it is because I trust you to do the right thing, for *all* of us.



I understand that, Carlos.



I hope, in the name of all you hold sacred, Nicholas, that you know what you are doing.

For there will be much blood on your hands if you do not.

There will be blood on my hands either way, old friend. So will you call your pupils? Or shall I?





Oh my sweet lord Jesus protect us.



And whatever would be upsetting *you*, soldier-boy?

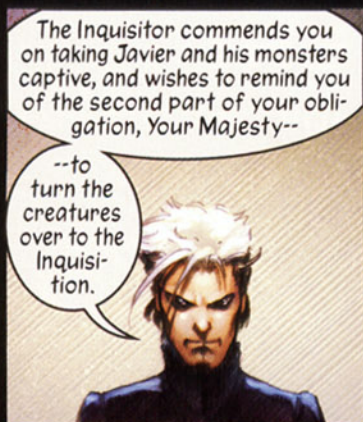


Have you never seen an Orkneyman before?



Ah, *yes*. I've been expecting you, young Petros.

And what message have you for me today?



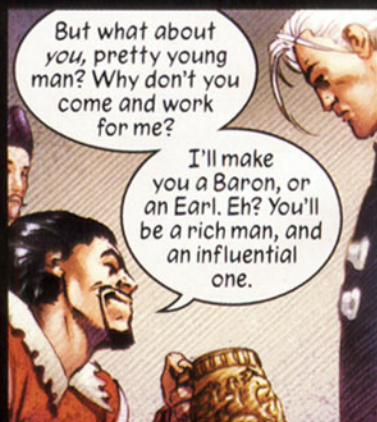
The Inquisitor commends you on taking Javier and his monsters captive, and wishes to remind you of the second part of your obligation, Your Majesty--

--to turn the creatures over to the Inquisition.



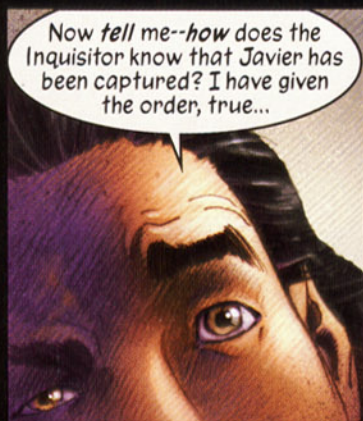
My obligation? MY OBLIGATION?

I am the King of Scotland, soon to be crowned the rightful King of England. My obligation is to my conscience and to my God. Not to some Spanish offal-eater.



But what about *you*, pretty young man? Why don't you come and work for me?

I'll make you a Baron, or an Earl. Eh? You'll be a rich man, and an influential one.

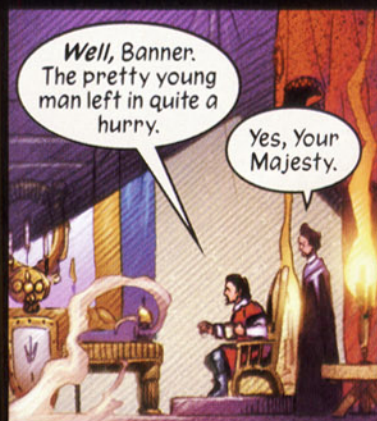


Now *tell* me--*how* does the Inquisitor know that Javier has been captured? I have given the order, true...



Perhaps a little bird told him, Your Majesty.

And I hope that you will not take it amiss if, for now, at least, I keep my current position.



Well, Banner. The pretty young man left in quite a hurry.

Yes, Your Majesty.

"Next time...I do not think he should be permitted to leave so easily."

Hmm. We shall see what James does. And if he will not give us his captives, then I am quite prepared to take them from him. Soon it will be time for another journey across the North Atlantic.

Now...I have a message for you to give our man in the Vatican...

"Tell him *this*, Petros. Tell him that the time I spoke of is coming...and that I will let him know when it is time to act."

Underthoood. Well, tell him that there have been more enquirieth about the mitthing papal envoy.

I have advithed the Holy Father that he did not arrive in Domdaniel, but wath moht likely killed by bandiith in the mountainth.

I doubt that he believed me.

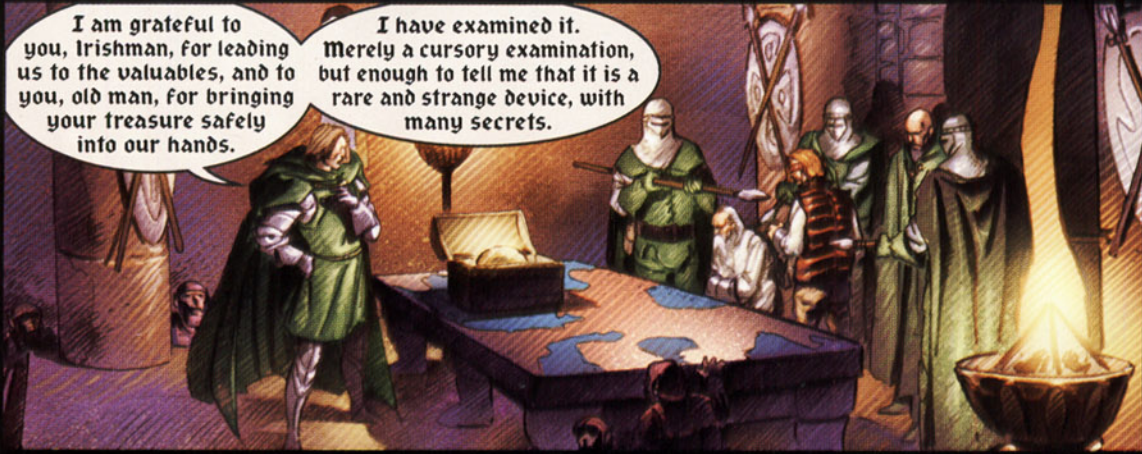
Thill, at prethent, ath far ath I can thee, there ith too much attention on the activitieth of Count Von Doom for his Holineth to worry about the affairth of the Inquithithion.

"Thothe of uth who are loyal wait only for hith word."




Welcome to Latveria, gentlemen.

I am your host, Count Otto von Doom.



I am grateful to you, Irishman, for leading us to the valuables, and to you, old man, for bringing your treasure safely into our hands.

I have examined it. Merely a cursory examination, but enough to tell me that it is a rare and strange device, with many secrets.




It was in the hope that I could persuade you to divulge some of those secrets that I brought you up here. Is there anything you wish to say?



I see.

Still, you shall not be tortured, because I am too fine a fellow to torture you, and you are too old and frail to survive it for long.

And because I already own the finest mind there is for all matters alchemical and mechanical.



So whether you wish me to unlock its secrets or not does not matter to me. I SHALL unlock them, and I shall continue with my grand adventure, and soon enough I shall rule the world.

You do not wish to say anything. No?

We shall talk more soon.

Thinks a lot of himself, doesn't he?

"It glows, Reed. How does it glow? It casts light into the darkness. It is not gold. It is not glass. I have never seen anything like it."



I have told you my ideas of ways to make it give up its secrets... There must be a way to break it open, to get inside.

I could weaken it with Aqua Fortis... What do you suggest I try first?

Why don't you just lock it away in the darkness and *forget* about it, Otto? You don't know what it is or what it can do.

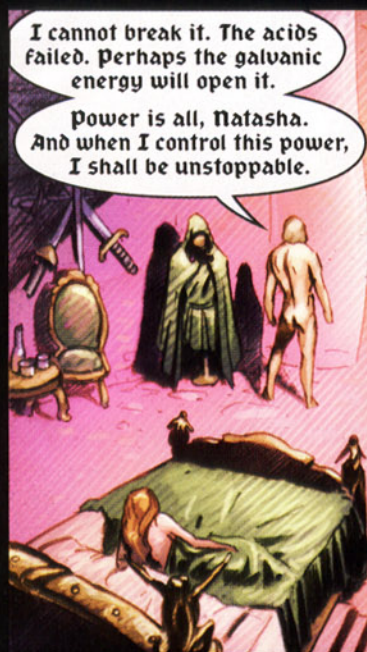
Everything you told me about it sounds *wrong*. Like it's not *from* here.

You are a coward and a fool, Reed. It is why **YOU** are the one who is locked away in the darkness. While I shall have light everlasting...



I cannot break it. The acids failed. Perhaps the galvanic energy will open it.

Power is all, Natasha. And when I control this power, I shall be unstoppable.



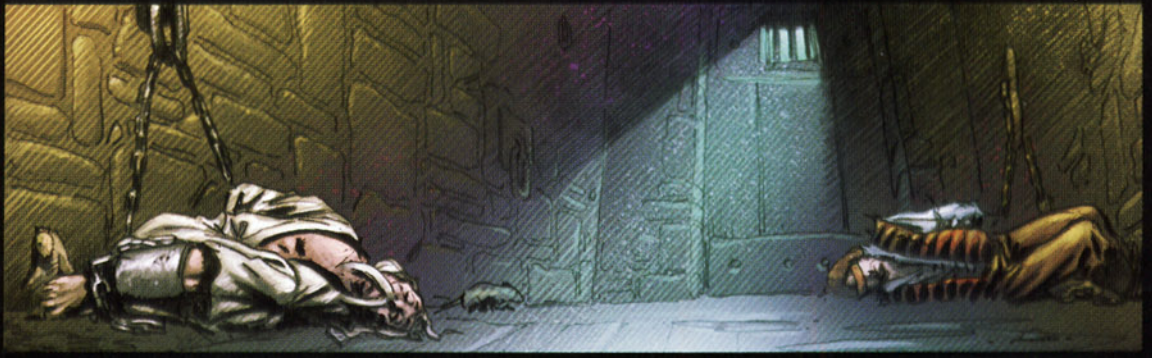
You are *already* unstoppable, Otto. All around us, the world falls into chaos. You write a new world on the ruins of the old.

But you must be careful.



There is no careful. There is no right, no wrong. There is only **VON DOOM**.





Hello, old friend. Are you well?

I am well, Donal. You?

I live.

"Good. The thing you were bringing to me?"

"It is here, in the castle. Doom has it, but he does not have it."

"For now, his attention has been distracted, by a curiosity--I brought it with me, hoping that it might distract attention."

What manner of curiosity?

A golden ball. It fell from the sky, some fifteen years ago and was a gift to the Order. I hope it will keep him occupied, while the Irishman and I get ourselves out of here. Somehow.

But it seems to me that Doom's prisoners do not escape.

Then we will have to remedy that.

"Hey! Old man! What's *wrong*?"

Are you all right? You were moaning in your dreams, and your heart was pounding fit to burst...

I am good. I saw Strange. He tells me that all will be well. They will free us. They will come.

Well now. Isn't *that* good to hear?

You know, if it wasn't for your dreams, old feller, given our situation, I can imagine I might feel almost discouraged.



I have spoken... to the Old Man. Each mirror-journey makes me more and more tired...and so cold...

I have been to that place before, Clea... it was a mountain fastness. A castle, built into a mountain...

...but when? When was I there?



Here, my sweet. Drink this...it will warm you.

Let me see...

"I am in the heart of a mountain, far from here, a place built to hold Earth and Air, Water and Fire..."



Aye. That was it. But what can the four elements signify? Everything that is, is made of those substances...



Stephen...what if it was four people? One who burns like flame, one who flows like water, one made of rock, one of air...

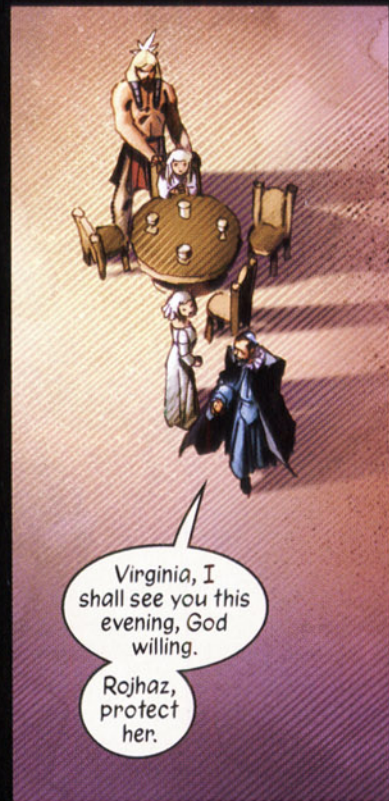
Them? They are dead.

And if they aren't?



Yes. I see. You are wise, my love.

It is almost dark. I am late for the meeting at the Tower. I fear that you will soon have a dead traitor for a husband, Clea.



Virginia, I shall see you this evening, God willing.

Rojhaz, protect her.



Mistress *Clea*? Can I ask what you were talking about? The people who were elements...?

Certainly, Virginia. Let me see...

Sir Richard Reed was one of the most brilliant men who ever walked.



"Ten years back, he mounted an expedition to the New World, seeking not gold, or treasure, but knowledge.

"His ship, the *Fantastick*, was of his own design, captained by an old friend.



"There were others on the ship with him. A young adventurer, Master Storm, who had killed a man in a duel, they say, and had been sent abroad by the Queen...

"...and Storm's sister also, fleeing a man in London Town to whom she was betrothed, and whom she did not love.



There is a song the people sing. Let me see...

There were four brave souls rode the oceans abroad, 'Twas on the Fantastick they'd sail...



I've heard that song! The sailors on the *Virginia Maid* used to sing it! I could never understand the story.

Something about a light which changed them, and saving people from a huge monster or something.



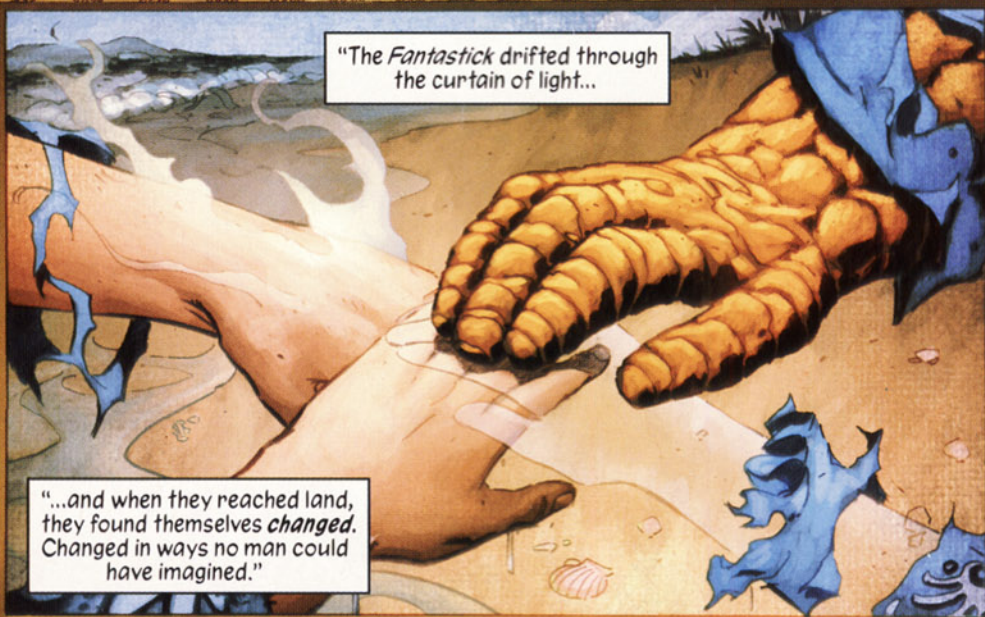
"There is a sea called Sargasso, and it was on that sea that their ship was becalmed. It was adrift for days.

"Until, ahead of them they saw a curtain of light, which rent the world.



"The terrified crew thought their doom had come, and taking the ship's boat, rowed themselves away, but Reed and his two friends stayed with the ship, and so did the brave Captain.

"The *Fantastick* drifted through the curtain of light..."



"...and when they reached land, they found themselves *changed*. Changed in ways no man could have imagined."

"Reed being Reed, they continued their journey westward, around the world. They would send messages home, from time to time. They were heroes who gave help to the weak and troubled.

"And then one day they *vanished*. The word went out that they were dead... but no man could say where they had died. And in time, hope faded as well.



"But hope, like heroes, can prove hard to kill."

When I touched it to your galvanic jar, it seemed as if faces swam in the golden surface.

Perhaps if there were a greater galvanic force... What if I were to put up a rod made of silver, above the castle, and then run it to the sphere...?

When lightning strikes, then we would see fireworks. Eh, Reed? Eh?



The Tower of London.

"You do not wish to play cards with the others?"

"I do not have the patience for it. To put it simply, Master Grey, I am scared, and angry. I fear for my life."

My wings are bound, and the cloth constricts me.

I am *fired* of looking like something I am not. I am *sick* of this pretense. And you, lad? How are *you*?

Very much the same.

Sir? Why do you talk to Master Grey, sir?

Scotius. Please.

I talk to Master Grey because I wish to, *sir*: I may talk to whom I please.

Indeed?

Indeed.

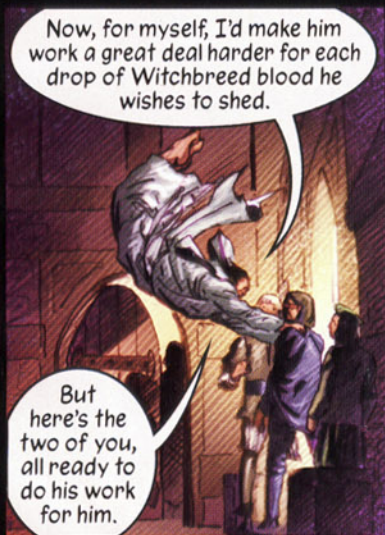
Do you wish to *fight* me, sir?





Now, is this not preposterous, two men preparing to fight over nothing?

Surely, if we fight each other, we'll be doing what pleases King James the most.



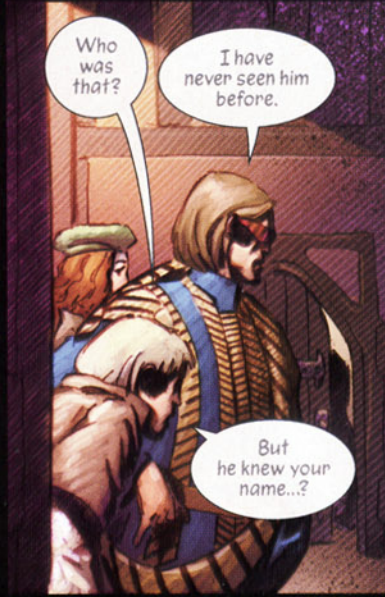
Now, for myself, I'd make him work a great deal harder for each drop of Witchbreed blood he wishes to shed.

But here's the two of you, all ready to do his work for him.



Listen to your friend, Master Somerisle.

Your anger may soon be our most powerful weapon. Keep it for our enemies.



Who was that?

I have never seen him before.

But he knew your name...?



Good evening, gentlemen. Please pardon my lateness.

You're not a ghost this time, Strange? Or a dream?

Touch me if you doubt me, Fury.



You know Carlos Javier?

By reputation only. I am honoured.

The honour is all mine.



So. We three traitors are gathered together in the Tower, and when King James reaches London, he will place our heads on spikes over Temple Bar, and crows will take our eyes.

Traitors, Strange? You dare...?



We *are* here to discuss acting in defiance of the crown, are we not? That's *treachery*, any way you cut it.



Fury. You asked me, when the Queen was alive, if I thought the world was truly ending?

Aye.

Well, I believe it is. Creation is coming apart at the seams. We have very little time left to stave off disaster.

And if this is true...



...what can we do?

I do not know. Perhaps this Templar treasure can help us. Perhaps not. But if any man would know, it is Reed.



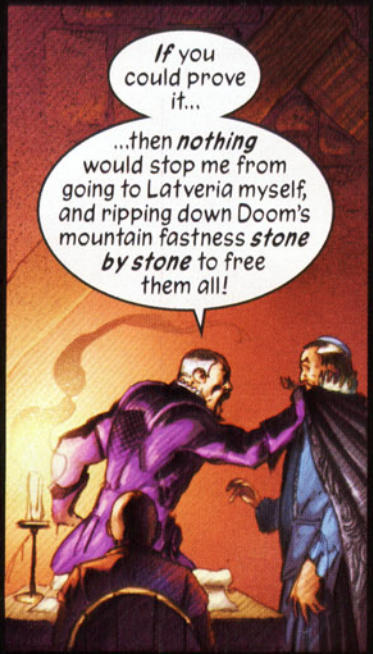
A bleak jest, Strange.

Reed is dead. All four of them vanished, after leaving Russia, almost five years ago.




And if I told you that he was alive? That he is a captive of Doom's?

Just as the Templar treasure is, and your agent?




If you could prove it...

...then *nothing* would stop me from going to Latveria myself, and ripping down Doom's mountain fastness *stone by stone* to free them all!




I can prove nothing. I am merely a mountebank. You said so yourself, to me, this morning, when I was a hundred miles away.

Did you enjoy your bread and cheese?



He speaks the truth, Nicholas.




How can you know for sure?

I don't. But I know that he believes he speaks truly. And I trust him.

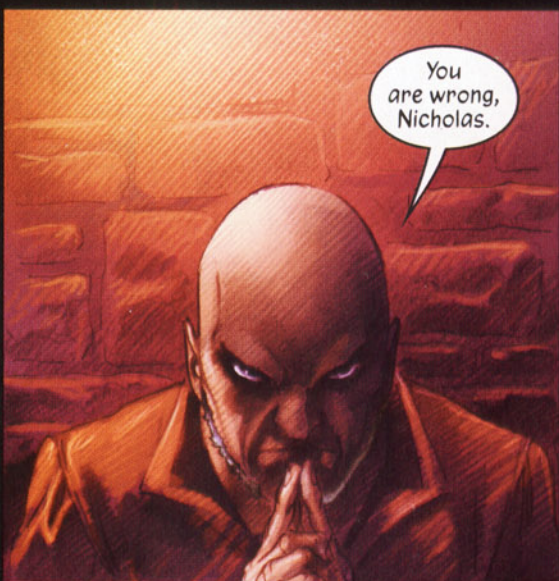
I see.

Then I'll believe you, Strange. Although I fear that I am signing my death warrant.



But to raise the army of men I would need to attack Latveria... to lead it across Europe, with all hands against us, would be impossible.

And James would never give me an army. Nor could I get an army there fast enough.



You are wrong, Nicholas.



You do *not* need an army. And it does not have to take weeks.

But when this is over, I want your word that you will find a safe place for my people. Somewhere neither James nor the Church will be able to harm us... those of us who are still alive.



And if we help you, then every hand will be against us all. My people, and yours.

You understand that, Nicholas? We will be traitors and fugitives and monsters forever.



I do not believe that the world is ending, Carlos. I neither like nor trust Doctor Stephen Strange. I failed to protect my Queen, and now I find myself betraying my new King.

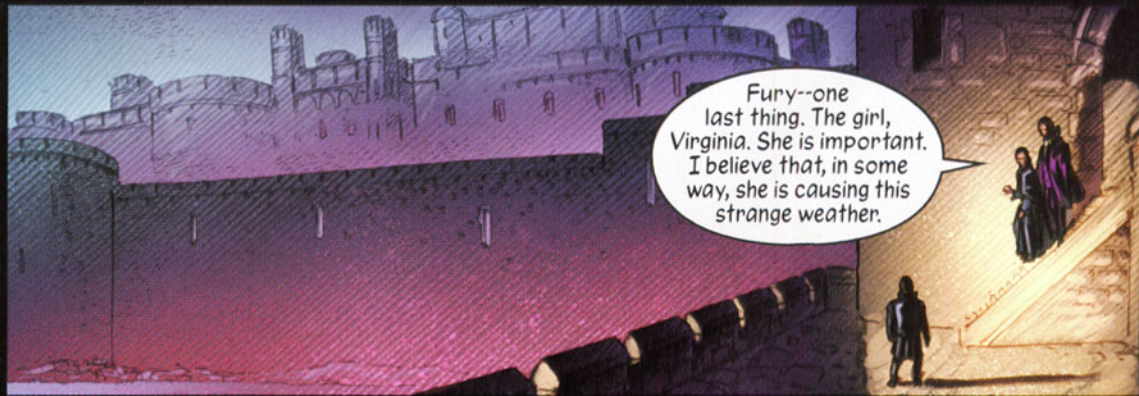


But Reed was my friend. And *you* are my friend.

You have my word.



Then I'll need a ship, the strongest, the fastest that you have.



Fury--one last thing. The girl, Virginia. She is important. I believe that, in some way, she is causing this strange weather.

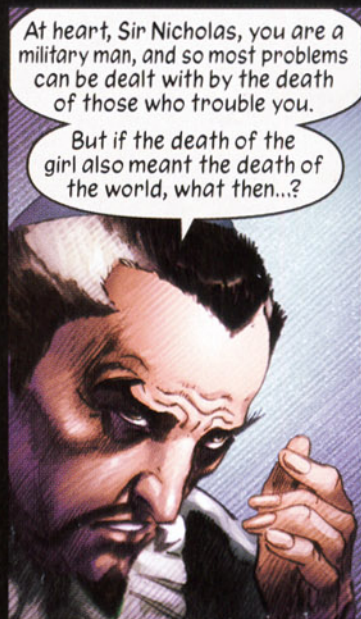


Hm. Then we should kill her.

I do not believe that would be a good idea.

No? It seems perfectly straightforward to me.

I am certain it does.



At heart, Sir Nicholas, you are a military man, and so most problems can be dealt with by the death of those who trouble you.

But if the death of the girl also meant the death of the world, what then...?



Uhh...

Strange?



I...I am sorry. I don't know... what...I feel very...

You are white as chalk, Doctor.

Peter, make sure that Doctor Strange gets safely back to his home.



And then...go back to your village, to your Aunt and your Uncle. Get an honest job, lad, making chairs or building bridges. And try to forget that you ever worked for me.

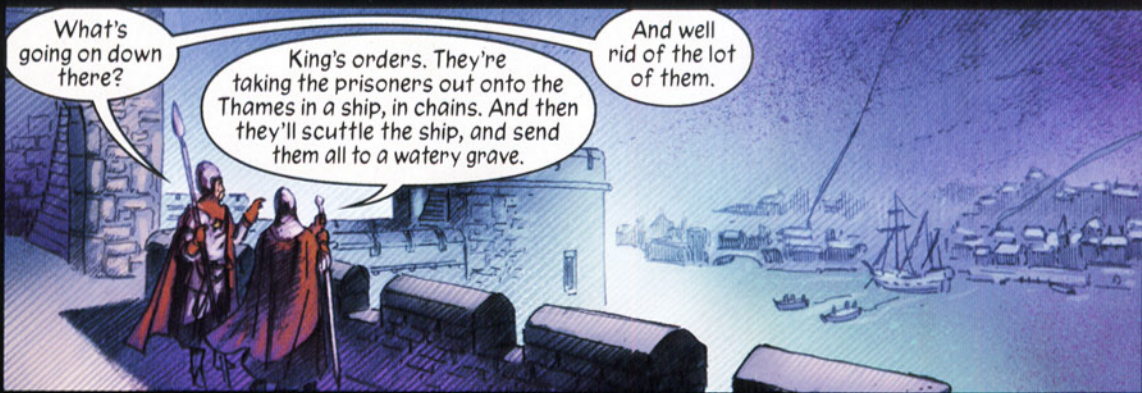
Do you understand me?

No, sir.



You worked well and hard, lad. Fare you well.

And if you think that James is onto you, slit your throat. It'll be cleaner. God be with you.



What's going on down there?

King's orders. They're taking the prisoners out onto the Thames in a ship, in chains. And then they'll scuttle the ship, and send them all to a watery grave.

And well rid of the lot of them.

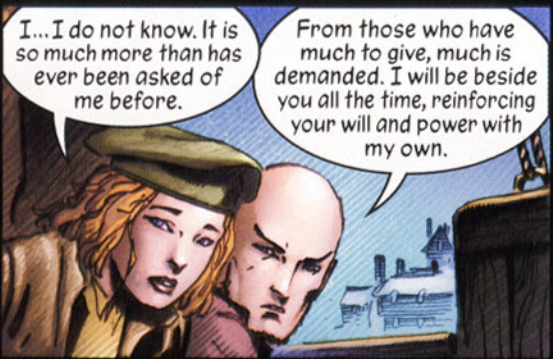


And what is the name of this vessel, Fury?

The Eagle's Shadow, Carlos.

It is a good name. Let us hope our chains hold...

Well, Master Grey? Are you *ready*?



I... I do not know. It is so much more than has ever been asked of me before.

From those who have much to give, much is demanded. I will be beside you all the time, reinforcing your will and power with my own.



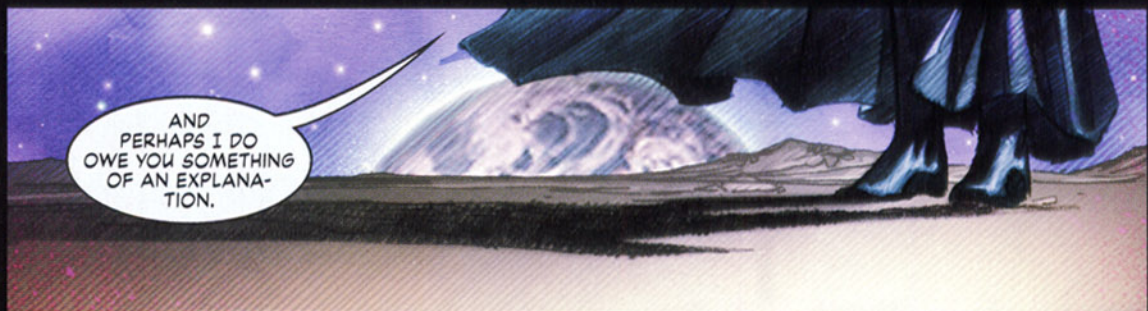
Master Somerisle?

Begin.



Now, Jean!





To Be Continued...