

# DOCTOR TOMBSTONE



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*Vulgrym the Undying, the White Death, Master of Vampires and Lord of the Back Cabal, has strove for centuries to recreate the world in his vision of undeath. Though dead since the Middle Ages, he has quietly gathered sinister allies and executed vital missions throughout the ages, working in secret and strange ways to remain undetected by this realm's defenders.*

*Finally, after years of careful maneuvering and precise planning, the last part of his plan is at hand. Now, only a handful of outcasts are all that stands in the way of his evil plan.*

**A RENEGADE DOCTOR - A BEDEVILED  
BODYGUARD - A CURSED EMISSARY -  
AND AN INSCRUTABLE WITCH!**

*Bound by fate, they must overcome their own personal demons to face a dangerous foe the world is not even aware exists! Thrust into the cryptic and macabre world of necromancy, against an immortal archwizard and his maniacal plans of tyranny and undeath, they must work together to thwart his insane plans.*



*Inn of Lost Keys 1997*

# PROLOGUE



The river cabin of Dr. Jorge Curion, noted mystical healer and spiritual leader of his people in South Equador.

Ever a cautious man, Doctor Curion sleeps deeply, content his wards are intact and secure.

Meticulously set and tested, the Master Wizard's wards could stop anything short of an Archwizard.

Or at least he thought.

Ahem.

Awake now, good doctor, slumber has ended for you.

hUNH?  
WHAT...?

The time has come for dues to be paid, yes?

WAIT!  
Baba, I have it!  
I have...

Too late, Doctor. Now you will serve another purpose.

As the Baba chants, her companion securely holds Dr. Curion in place despite his desperate struggles.

SOUL JAR OF VULGARIM

AAAAARRGGHH

The Baba leaves the lifeless husk without a backwards glance.

Your soul will barely cover the tally, but it will have to do.

Dr. Curion's screams as his soul is sucked into the witch's gemstone!

I would say you will be missed, but, alas, I don't think you will.

# CHAPTER 1

The Aqua Oil


3:03

The House of Lost Keys.

Alone in his study, Dr. Tombstone gazes intently into his mystical mirror, same as he does every night - searching for his lost love's soul.

Long ago, he lost his young daughter and wife in a Faustian bargain gone awry. Afterwards, the Doctor made a new pact, with the God of Death, the Lady Donne, in exchange for the life of his daughter, Shannon. Through many trials, he regained her, but now must serve the Lady in return.

Now, he roams the world, his mission to bring those who defy Death to heel. Operating outside of the sanctioned magical institutions of the day as a renegade, he is outcast and reviled by fellow practitioners, though few are foolish enough to match spells with him. Dr. Tombstone is not named so without cause.



Along with the strange companions he has accumulated throughout the years, the doctor has been tasked with destroying Undead's champion, the Undying Volgrym the Necromancer. Every month, the Lady of Donne sends her representative.

Tonight, the Lady's messenger is due.

The Doctor sighs.

Alison, I will find you.

After another evening of fruitless searching, the doctor prepares for Death's messenger.

You are playing with fire...

...the Lady's lackey will be here shortly. What if they caught you using the Mirror?

Heironymous, his owltrice familiar, another bond to his soul, has never approved of his pact.

Though to be fair, the cantankerous avian does not approve of much.

You worry too much, Heir. Mr. Silk is not due until...

...Now? I hope I did not disturb your studies, Good Doctor, but I do believe promptness is a virtue.

So. Any progress to report to the Lady? Have you or your "lackeys" found that wretch, Vulgrym?

Of course, Mr. Silk. The vampires of the Frost Circle knew nothing of Vulgrym, as I suspected. I read each one's mind as they dissolved in the Niagra.

The frequency of soulless bodies has increased in the meantime, as I predicted, and more powerful victims. I believe Vulgrym is at work here.

\*sigh\* You really must let a maid up here one of these days...

So the vamps weren't trucking with Vulgrym, so what? Keep ripping out fangs, eventually it will lead to the Necromancer.

Hmm, soulless, huh? Doesn't sound like Vulgrym's style, Doc. The ol' bear worships Orcus, and they're more about binding souls than obliterating 'em!

Waste of time. Vulgrym has something big planned, and he's getting close.

The Lady chose me, so let me do my job.



Besides, the Lady told me she would aid me in finding my wife.

You have yet to supply any pertinent information.

HA! Doctor, you know that's not how this works! Demands made of the Lady always end poorly.

I have made inquiries however - it would seem the demon who abducted her, this XOMOX, is missing. Ironic, huh?



Listen, you can tell the Lady...

Bzzzttt

Gotta go, Mr. Sabin. Tell the Lady I'm working on the Necromancer.

Bzzzttt

My way, this time.

Click

Yo, Toomes!

Yo, Zigs. Be down in a sec. Whats this about a change of plan?

Rest assured, Good Doctor, I will.

I will be seeing you soon.

How did...? Nevermind, I should be used to it... Your old friend Wren called me...



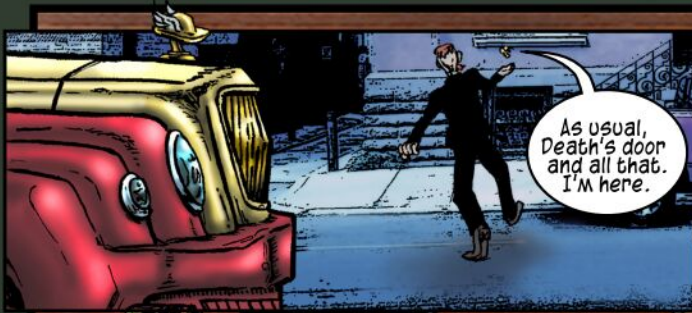
A wizard behind the wheel, the Doctor's second partner navigates the city at break-neck speeds with stylish ease.

Centuries older than the city itself, an ancient witch's curse propels him to move constantly or die a withering death.



..she says you don't return her calls or texts, but I said that's just you.

Anyway. She says an old friend of yours, Jorge something, is in trouble. Something about his wards being tripped.



As usual, Death's door and all that. I'm here.



EVENING EVERYBODY! Mademoiselle Degas, rounds on me for all my friends!



Well, look what the wind blew in...

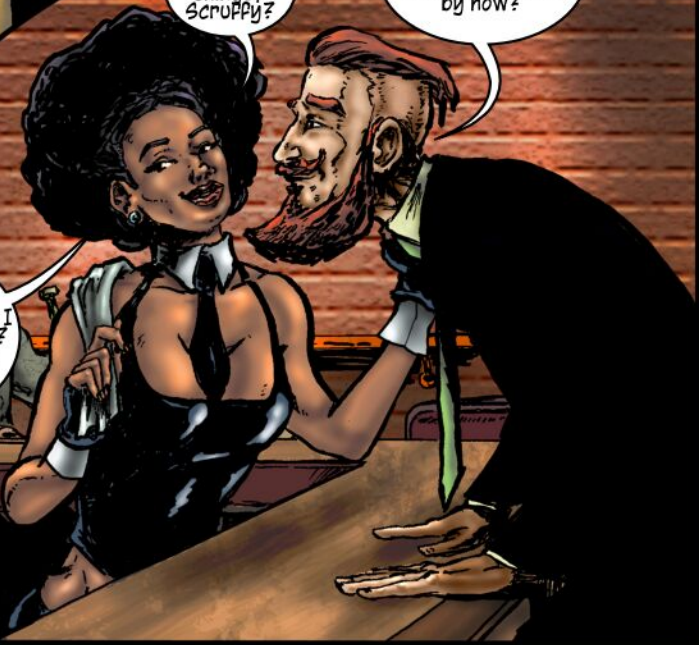
Thanks Red!

Ayh, Red! Good man.

How's things, Scruppy?

If I had a tail, I would wag it, kayla! I'm gonna say... 11 by now?

Ha! Close, red! Lemmi's at least 12 deep. Can I getcha' anything? I'm sure the Doc will be right down.





Doctor Tombstone's other partner, drinking at his usual spot at the bar, bears his own curse, as well.

Zigs.

Lemmi.

A Fallen Aesir, kidnapped and experimented on by a deranged Ogre warlock, he constantly wages a war to keep his curse's transformation at bay.

**HAR HAR HAR**

Long as there's bottles or bodies to break, I'm good!

Yo, Doc. Good ta' go?

I got ya covered, Lemmi - I remember the last time.

Definitely. Lets move.

Bye, Lemmi.

Night', Sheila - Member what good ol' Lemmi told ya.

Reds, ya' dog, no update Per the Answer Man?

HA! Get off it Lemmi! I got a case of Killians in the trunk, does it matter where we're going?

Ahhh...I knew there was something she wasn't telling me. If she's Coven, why are we helping her?

Yes, but not when they need me.

Hey, Isn't Wren with the Coven? Don't they have rules against working with you, Friends or no?

In this instance, our interests coincide.

The partners drive off into the humid July night, to the cabin of Dr. Curion.

3:28  
The Cabin of  
Jorge Curion.

Coven agent Wren Silvermoon was the first to peel Jorge's wards Falter. Per protocol, as the closest authority, she inspects the scene for clues and careless signs.

Yet an old photograph, a memory, has stopped her ardent investigation.



Instantly transported to a simpler, happier time of her life, she barely hears the doorbell.



Lemmi!  
Ziggy! Ben!  
How have you  
all been?

Hey Wren,  
Looking good.

Wren!  
How ya'  
doing?

Wren.

Honestly, I've  
been better - this is  
just the latest in a  
series of Murders. Poor  
Jorge. The Bureau is  
getting desperate for  
info on this Mage.

All that are left  
are burnt out  
husks, all attempts  
at contact are  
fruitless...

...which is  
why I've been  
calling you, Ben. I  
know you can  
go...further.

Smells like  
calamari in here,  
am i right, Lemmi?

I'm glad you  
called, this one  
is fresh.

Jeez,  
Benjamin, I know  
you and Jorge  
weren't close, but  
that's cold.

Anyway,  
can you see if  
you can reach  
him? We have to  
save Jorge's soul  
- they've gone  
too far this  
time!

Squid. And  
Hungary  
Water.



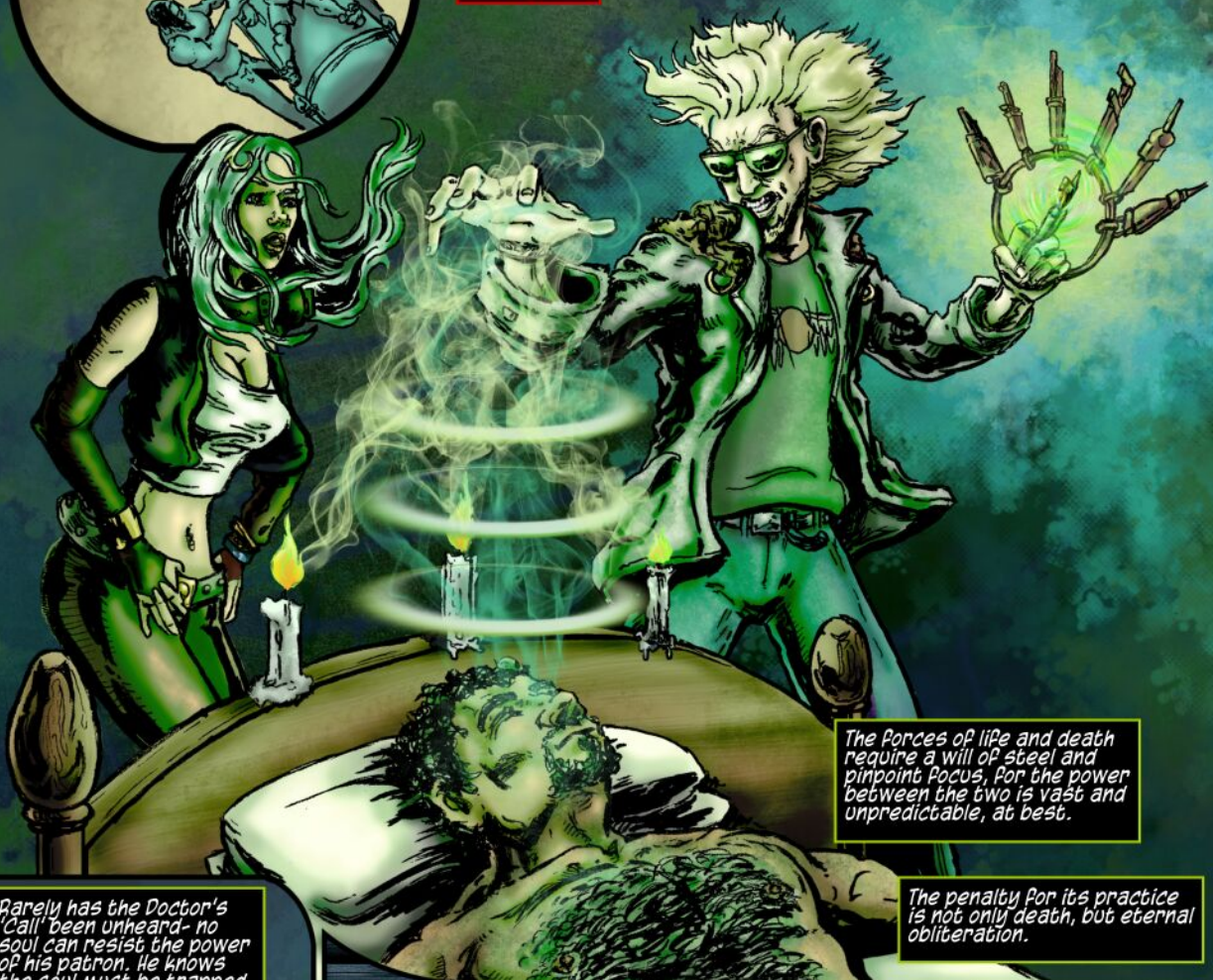
Dr. Tombstone examines the  
strangely puckered corpse  
and prepares for an inquiry.

Do whatever you must - what happens next remains in this room.

Relax, Wren. I would have let Jorge not if I Peared the Bureau.

Forbidden in all nations, the school of Necromancy is only sanctioned in extremely rare cases, and only cast by Judges of the High Court.

CALL BEYOND THE GRAVE



The forces of life and death require a will of steel and pinpoint focus, for the power between the two is vast and unpredictable, at best.

The penalty for its practice is not only death, but eternal obliteration.

Rarely has the Doctor's 'Call' been unheard - no soul can resist the power of his patron. He knows the soul must be trapped or destroyed.

This is bad. Everyone, out.



The Doctor does not look forward to what he must do next.

So, you knew Dr. Coron well.. Was he a scotch man?



Really, Ziggy?



-sigh- Yes, there should be something downstairs.



Not a bad spread, there's some good stuff here.

Easy there, Red, we have work to do.

Find anything, Lemmi?

I got the trail.

GREAT! Let's go!

All right, the Doc can catch up.



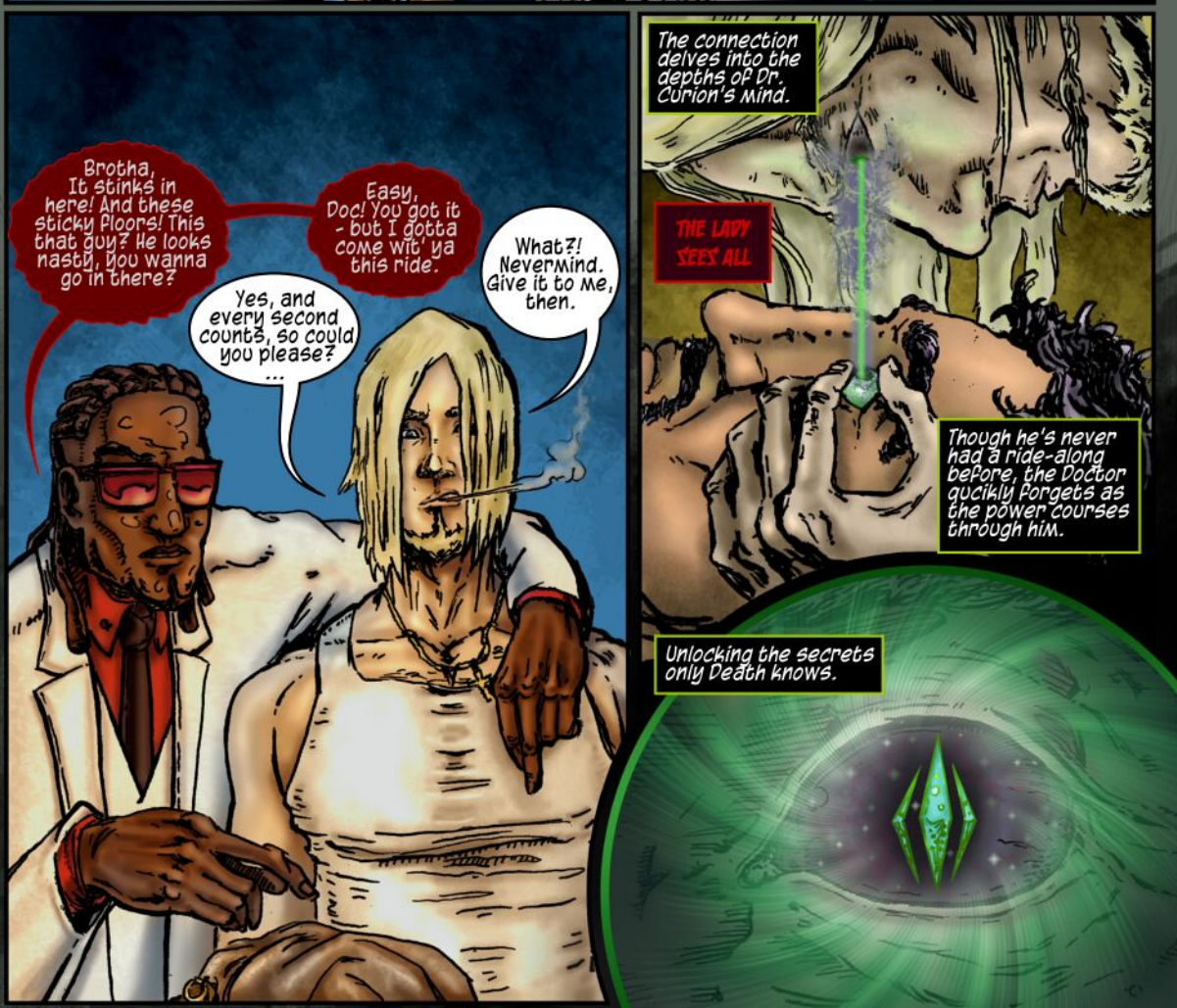
Alone, the Doctor can now access his patron's secret rituals, forbidden to be witnessed by the "uninitiated".

heh heh... That didn't take long, now, did it?

Yes, very clever, Mr. Satin.

You know what I want, can we get on with it? There is a possible connection to Vulgrym here.

It seems the Lady must have a keen interest in events to send her messenger twice.



Brotha, It stinks in here! And these sticky floors! This that guy? He looks nasty, you wanna go in there?

Easy, Doc! You got it - but I gotta come wit' ya this ride.

Yes, and every second counts, so could you please?

What?! Nevermind. Give it to me, then.

The connection delves into the depths of Dr. Curion's Mind.

THE LADY SEES ALL

Though he's never had a ride-along before, the Doctor quickly forgets as the power courses through him.

Unlocking the secrets only Death knows.

But not without effort,  
it would seem.



That don't  
look good.

Dr. Tombstone's ethereal form enters  
Dr. Curion's 'mind's eye' via the ocular  
nerve, to a scene of rapidly dissolving  
thoughts. The attack seems to have left  
behind a secondary attack, seeking to  
erase any remnants left behind.

506#@

Dr. Tombstone will  
have to act fast.



With but a thought,  
he plunges in search  
of his quarry.

Maaa  
nnnn... If I  
had arms here,  
I'd be all about  
helping ya'  
out, son.

Seems  
your fancy  
spell forgot  
that.

This is no good  
- We have to get  
closer to the  
center before it  
dissolves.

Yeaahh...

..Didn't think  
i'd be tearing  
the place  
apart.

Dr. Curion's memory nodes continue to deteriorate, even as the Doctor probes deeper.

Desperate, he surges towards a cluster that seems promising.

C'MON!

Precious seconds tick by as his search continues to prove fruitless.

There it is!

Where!?! I can't see a thing in this mire!

GOT IT!

Oh, that... What is that?

The last thing Dr. Curion ever saw - Baba Luvana.

Ah, a baba, of course.... Is she an acolyte of Vulgrum? As in, why do we care?

No, the Babas were ancient before Vulgrum was even born.

There has to be a reason an ancient witch queen is stealing souls - her kind harness their power by other methods. Still, there must be a connection....

Meanwhile outside...

So what 'ya got, Kemo Sabi?

Put out that damned light and I'll tell 'ya'.

It makes sense they came by the water.

Trail ends 'ere. They came and left by this neighbor's docks. I'd say they're no more than an hour out.

We borrow this guy's boat, we might got a shot at catchin' em - thier stink is still in the air.

What are we waiting for?! Let's go! Ben can catch up.

Right. Listen Wren - I hear yer no slouch, but I'm not chasing this mage-killer without our big gun.

This guy's taken down multiple wiz-boys, and if they're the caliber of Dr. Curion, I wanna know what you know.

Heh - Red's right, Wren. I'm grabbin' a seat.

A shrewd judge of character and excellent gambler, Red can sense when someone is holding something back.

We need to move! I can explain on the way.

You're impossible, Ziggy? I thought you braver than this!

Look, I get what you're saying. What I'm saying is we can't rush in to something we have no idea about. What if there's a water elemental involved? I'd like to know before I step on that boat. The Doc will find out. He's quick.

Ha ha hah! Bravery's got nothing to do with it. We're not dumb, Wren - spill.





Ha! Got ya' there!

Come on, Wren. You have to tell us more.

Why would someone kill the Dr. Curion? What does the Coven know?

OK, Ok... Jorge was working for the Warlocks of the Cabal. He was researching the school of Necromancy.

Jorge had... a special talent.



Jorge was raised a Bruja, and after his schooling with us, he went back and took care of his people. He was a healer of all - Friend and Poe alike.



During the war, Jorge would visit the wounded soldiers, healing allies and invaders alike...

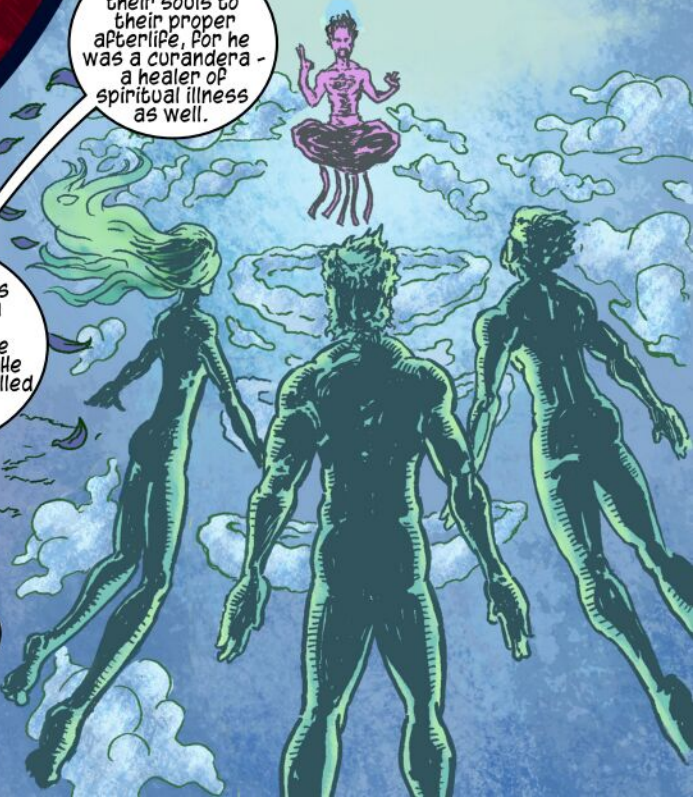
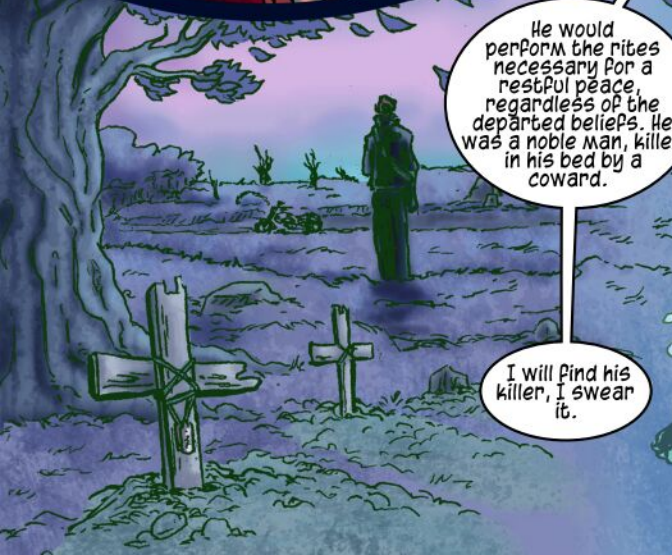
...and in the worst cases, to ease their passing as best he could, using his skills and magics to make their last moments comfortable, at least.

He was his people's spiritual guide. He was able to manifest beyond the veil of death, as he was taught to do by his ancestors, a tradition they guarded jealously.

Jorge would guide their souls to their proper afterlife, for he was a curandera - a healer of spiritual illness as well.

He would perform the rites necessary for a restful peace, regardless of the departed beliefs. He was a noble man, killed in his bed by a coward.

I will find his killer, I swear it.



So, no, Ziggy..

..I don't know who would want to kill a man like Jorge. He helped so many... WHAT THE!?

*Doctor Tombstone steps softly from the shadows as the witch finishes her tale.*

We're looking for Baba Luvana, Lemmi. When the Baba captured Jorge's soul in a blue crystal, we might be able to free his soul if we retrieve that.



I see you neglected to mention his "restoration". Wise.

I do not believe that Pact is relevant right now, Heir.

..Now see if you can find her, please.

We have to move now - I don't know what she wants with Jorge's soul, but I doubt she will hold onto it long.



Your wish is my command, "Master"...

So while the pigeon finds her, what's the plan, Tooms? I've heard about these "Babas" back home.

Babas are from the old country, like to travel land to land in their magic houses, and they don't go down easy. If we're dealing with one, at her home no less, we're gonna need some serious fire power.



I don't care what or where she is - I'm kicking her ass and taking her in, Baba or no Baba!

*The boat's engine grudgingly comes to life under Ziggy's light touch and the band's hunt begins.*

Hell Yeah!

Found these keys, Zig. Here's the plan...



Where the river meets the ocean.

So this is the big, Pancy Doctor the Boss wanted so badly? Doesn't look like much, I gotta say.

Think yer' getting a steal here, darling. The Necromancer destroys all copies of a book but his, and that's an old one.

That "rock" is the essence of Dr. Jorge Curion - a man who also meddled with Forces Far beyond his meager understanding, MP. Cul.

And old is a relative term - I remember the author when he was just a young boy tormenting toads on the river Dunajec. Much like your Master was, do not forget.

Simon Cul, who enjoys torture rather than conversation, is eager to be on his way.

"Meager" huh? Good! This'll be no sweat now, than?

Gotcha, Fragile as an egg. Anything else, lady?

**FOOL!  
BE CAREFUL!**

The soul within can escape through the smallest crack, rendering it useless to your master.

He knows the Babas traffic with mysterious entities outside this cosmos. Close to his own in fact.



Mr. Cul feels the wind chill suddenly.

Will do, Baba. I bid you adeu.

Tell your master if he "finds" more of these Tomes of Gaxzy, he would do well to inform me - I would be most appreciative.

One more thing "Simon" ...

... I know your true name and master, "Mr. Cul". I remember your kind from the Far Realms...

Strawmen. Many-Fanged. Hollowbug... I don't know what you plan with Lord Vulgrim, but cross me at your peril, doppleganger.

Duly noted and understood, Madame. Good eve.

...Rassa' Prassin... everyone so durned touchy on this spinning mudball...



Arriving moments too late, the Doctor must change plans.

We're late, Heir says the crystal is on that boat. Ziggy, take the boat and get the crystal, and we take-out the Baba.

Yeah, well, at least we can still see them both, Lem. Gotta learn how to adapt, grandpa.

Sounds good, Doc.

For a man so fast, how are you always late, Zigs? heh.



Speaking of splitting, don't you have a spell to cast? Looks like my half has a head start.

Right, don't let me keep you - Wren, Lemmi, you ready?

Yeah... Right behind you.

Bout time the action started!

Velvet hands, doc.

DUMAR'S DOOR OF TRANSLLOCATION

And Ziggy, be careful with the crystal.

..Any crack can obliterate Jorge's soul.

All translocation magic leaves even frequent casters momentarily dazed.

Ugh, this place reeks! This' the place.

The Doctor can feel the power here even before his senses return - an ancient, almost palpable menace hangs in the air.

Let me do the talking, Lem - the Baba's can take offense easily.

Ziggy is getting the crystal, so we just need information. If we can get it without..

My, my, my...



More visitors? My, I am quite the popular one tonight.



Good evening, Baba. Would you have a moment to converse?

Good, we can just kick her ass then.

When seems to have stayed behind.

My, aren't you a feisty one? Is that... Vanir I smell?

I will enjoy playing with you!



So big and angry... You are like dumb bear, yes?

DUMB BEAR!? Broad, I ain't no...

Easy, Lem...

Why do we not go inside and wrestle, gray bear. heh heh

Two huge creatures rise from the depths, summoned by Baba Luvana's silent call.



**BROAD!?!**  
Such disrespect! Such insolence! You will suffer the pain of a thousand deaths, Vanir filth!

You had to go and insult the immortal witch...

She started it. You want the bitch or the brain squids?

Mirroring the Baba Luvana's rage, the swirling winds intensify and the air hums with power.

Mirroring the Baba Luvana's rage, the swirling winds intensify and the air hums with power.

Despite the 50's style persona he has adopted, Simon Cui is not a man to be taken lightly. A vicious cutthroat and relentless tracker, it is with good reason that he is the Necromancer's top man.

And here I thought I wasn't going to have any fun tonight.

Be careful up there...

Having easily spotted his pursuers, he lures them into a little trick he's wanted to try for a time.



I don't want to explain to the Coven how I ran you over!

Relax, Red - you just keep it steady!



DAMN!

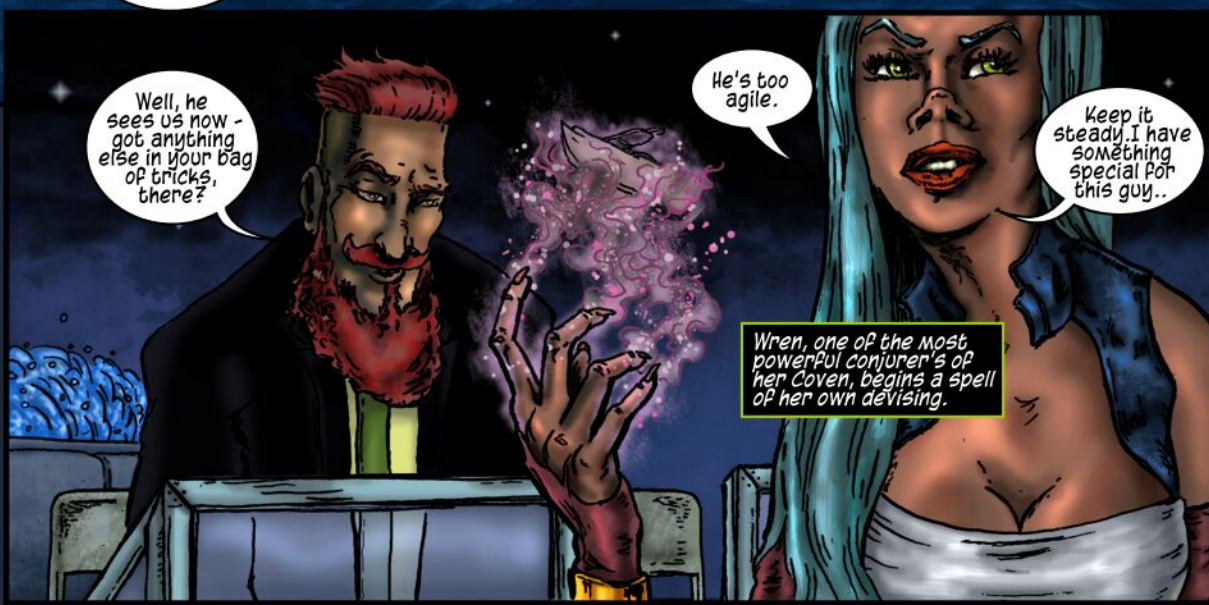
Hahahaha!

Well, he sees us now - got anything else in your bag of tricks, there?

He's too agile.

Keep it steady. I have something special for this guy..

Wren, one of the most powerful conjurers of her Coven, begins a spell of her own devising.



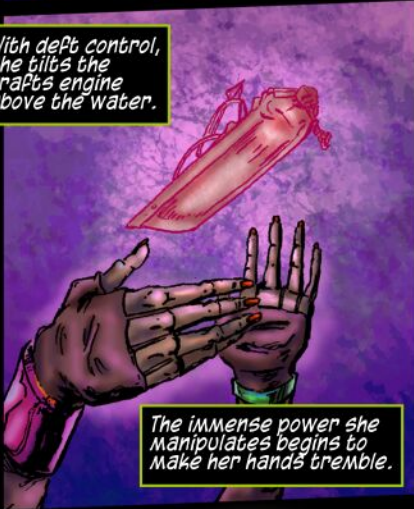
A spectral construct takes shape between her hands.



Simon Cul's boat is seized by Wren's arcane force.



With deft control, she tilts the craft's engine above the water.



Her spell suspends Simon helplessly above the waves!



Ya' got him, Wren!  
Give me a second to get close...

Yet, as Wren begins to lock the spell to approach, she feels a mystical surge...

...and Simon's speedboat is blown to smithereens!



NOOO!!

...er...and blow him up.





As they begin searching, Wren is visibly distraught.

I don't know what happened, I didn't want to kill him!

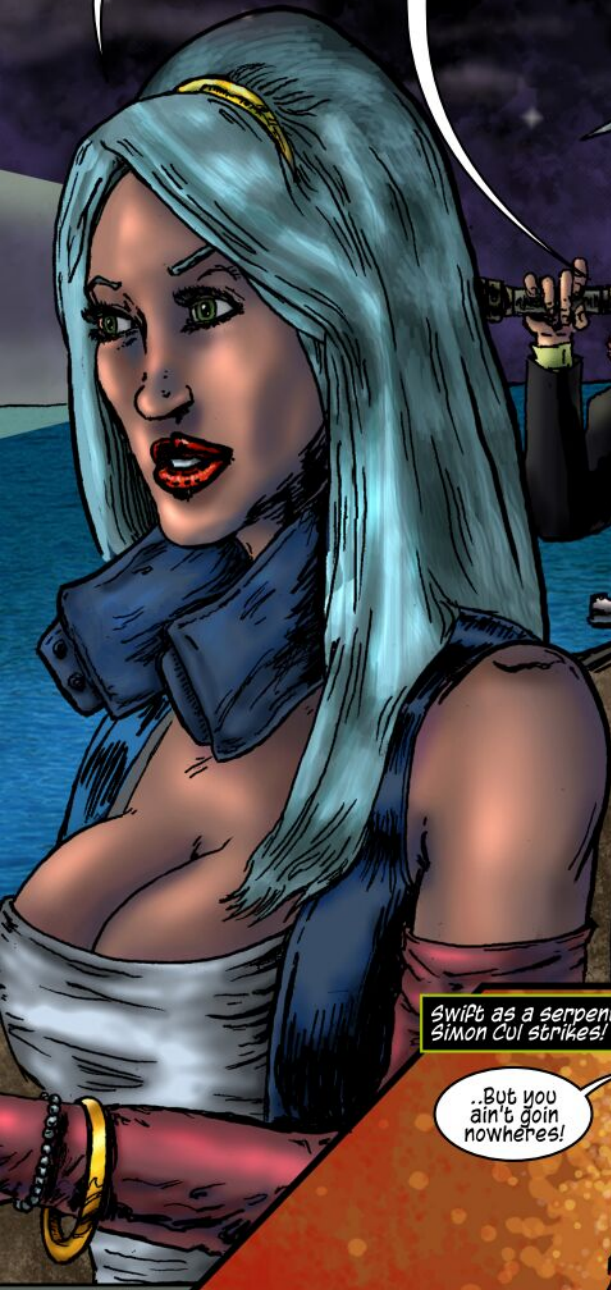
It's all right, I'm sure it's no loss to humanity. It'll just take a little longer to find the gem, that's all.

Now that we're close, I can use a simple retrieval spell to find the stone, just give me a moment.

Great, I think it went down right here.

Let's cast that spell and get out of here - I'm sure the doc could use our help.

Well, hate to break it to ya' Sparky...



Swift as a serpent, Simon Col strikes!

..But you ain't goin nowhere!

GRAAAGH!!

With unerring accuracy, Col's blades pierce multiple vital organs.



Takes more than an  
explodin' canoe to do me  
in, darling. Noow, what  
should I do with you?

Lord Vulgrim always  
needs fiery, young  
magelings, but he don't  
minds if I plays with ya'  
meself, first.

From his coat, Simon  
pulls a strange device  
with a vial on top...

Oooo...  
Sweetie, I have  
just the thing for you  
and that snippy  
attitude.

...inside which  
squirms a tiny,  
barbed worm!

Let me  
introduce you  
to a little friend  
from back  
home.

**ENOUGH,  
YOU  
FOOL!**

You have a  
big mouth for  
someone who was  
just blown up. Care  
for another  
dose?

Ya'know,  
you humans  
are soo  
slow.

If blowing up  
me boat didn't do  
the trick, lassy,  
why would your  
little fire bird  
spell?

A spinning darkness  
rapidly clouds Wren's  
mind as Cul's worm  
burrows towards her  
spinal column.

What did  
you do to  
Meee...\*

Just  
let the ghoul  
worm do its  
work, girlie,  
and we'll...

Gunshots shatter the mute night air.

Give it a rest, you 50's era gangster reject. You're not the only one who heals fast.

A side-effect of an ancient witch's curse, Ziggy's wounds heal almost immediately.

Ziggy was the ancient witch's favorite messenger, gifted with speed, resilience, and youth, yet compelled to never stop moving, lest age catch him.

Though hardly immortal, it does help in times like these.

If bullets and fire don't kill ya, I'll just cut ya apart, piece by piece.

Well, look at that. Maybe yer not as soft as I thought, stretch. Not soft, but...

With prodigious speed, Simon lunges!

slo-up p!

Ha!

Don't let the stylish suit fool ya.

Your gonna tell me what you did to Wren...

But quickly is disarmed by Ziggy.

...and hand over the crystal. And ya better be fast!

Now hold on, here...

...I'm gonna cut your head off, and then I'll take the stone from your corpse, freak.

Ya' know what, forget it...

I'm sure the Doc doesn't need ya to fix her, anyways.

Let's not do anything hasty here. I have the gem, just need a hand, ye see?

Unbeknownst to his captor, Simon begins to meld his form for escape..



...Foiling Ziggy's death stroke by growing giant bat's wings.



Back at the docks, a titanic battle continues to rage. Dr. Tombstone resists Baba Luvana's onslaught as Lemmi attacks her horrid pets.

Spell vs. Spell.

C'mere, ya' stupid squid!

Blade and bullet vs. beak and tentacle.





RRrrraahhh!

Lemmi decides to Porgo his ranged attack with a titanic leap from the deck.



The Monster Shudders under the force of his devastating attack!



Amazingly, the beast still remains airborne!

Killins harder when yer victim ain't in bed, hunh, beaky?

Lemmi readies his axe for the death blow.



DAMMIT!

Capable of shearing a truck in half, the second beast prepares to make Lemmi its next meal.



You want a peice, too?!?

His adrenaline burning the alcohol from his system, Lemmi feels the change begin.

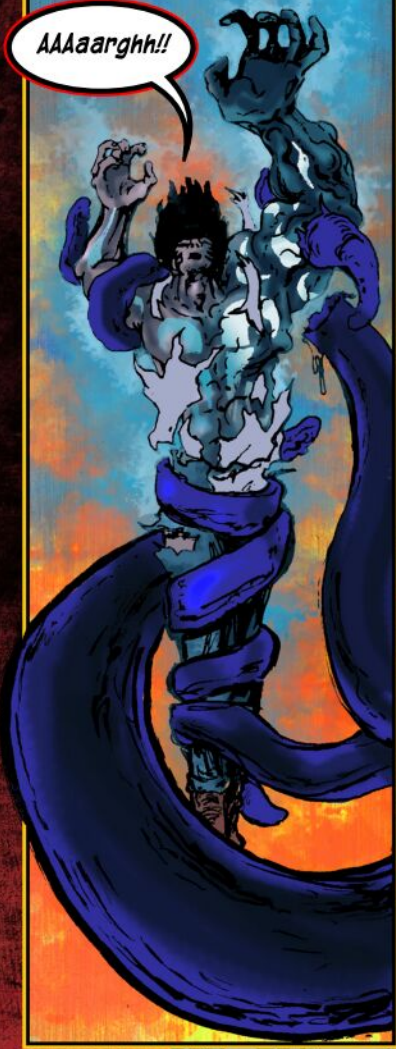


COME GET IT!!!

His cursed tattoos, branded by a mad Ogre shaman, begin to writhe and pulse.

Releasing the Ogremage's curse, his bones break and muscles warp as he transforms into the ogrish Mr. Breaker!

AAAaarghh!!



Now twice the size and ten times as mean, the bezerk Mr. Breaker lives to destroy! Delighting in the circumstances of his arrival, he begins pounding with malicious glee.



G'YAR, YA' BEAST!



Repeated blows crack the beast's iron-like beak as the quarrelling duo sink towards the docks.

And while Mr. Breaker rages, Dr. Tombstone engages in a deadly mystical dance with the ancient, otherworldly witch, Baba Luvana.



Ahhh...Little doctor, do you seek your doom, to attack Baba Luvana so?

I know you gave the gem away. Tell me where Vulgrim is, and we will leave you to your peace.

**NYX'S NECRO NEEDLES**



Heh heh, he told the Baba you would be here, you know?

**XAGY'S GORGON'S BREATHE**

Dirty resurrection-man - Maybe Baba don't want to tell. Maybe she prefers the bear to the little wolf heh heh.



Smoke. Really?

**FABULOUS FILTER OF FAUL**



You are as arrogant as he said! Your downfall will be so sweet to Luvana.

This is unnecessary, Baba.

Though you are ancient, Baba, I fear the outcome will be far different from the one you imagine.

Tell me now where Vulgrim is, and I may spare you.

The doctor taps the source of his Mistresses' power. The potential mystical forces begin to vibrate the very air.





The spell battle begins....

Do your worst, little man.

Very well.

PULL OF THE GRAVE

A paltry effort.

VULGRYM'S VOID RAIN

Your reputation has been a bit exaggerated, perhaps?

IRON COILS OF CARCERI

As with many, I am sure.

MORVENKINEN'S DISJUNCTION

THOUSAND VERMIN FANGS

Vulgrym gave you the spell you used to steal Curon's soul - only a necromancer as powerful as he could devise a spell to hide from me.

What does he need the souls for? Tell me where he is. The Lady has not added you to my list. Yet.

Little warlock, your patron holds no sway over me. I tire of your boasts and idle threats.

SENTEP'S DISINTEGRATION SHIELDING

Your search, and your life, ends NOW!

FALL FROM THE HEAVENS

PRISMATIC DOME OF PROTECTION

Tell me where Vulgrim is - you owe him nothing.

Why tell you?

You will not be alive to see his grand, floating Portress...

How the HELL?!

The Doctor watches as Baba Luvana plunges towards the sphere - contact means annihilation!

Yet the Baba's hand plunges through as if it was nothing but tissue paper.

... For your corpse will lie on the bottom of this delta!



STAY BACK!!!

Dr. Tombstone has never heard of a Prismatic Dome being shattered before. Though stunned by the ward's backlash, counters quickly with a powerful invocation.

And telepathically signals Heironymous to begin the last stage of his plan.

FURIOUS FIST THUNDERSTRIKE..

SCU M! I will EAT YOUR HEART FOR THAT!

Heir! NOW!

SLICING CLAW OF CEREBUS

Seconds slow to hours as the Doctor watches Baba Luvana summon the power to rip his still-beating heart out of his chest...

... And is not disappointed by Heironymous' precision!

What is happening...\*

The touch of Heironymous' tail turns Baba Lovana into stone almost instantly.

Doctor Tombstone struggles to break free from the Stone Fingers around his neck.

Unable to break her vise-like grip, he desperately begins an incantation.

The wind and choking hand robs his words as his spell is lost in the air.

The Doctor's magical coat, trimmed with the hair of the Nemean Lion, protects him from the impact somewhat.

A thunderclap fills his ears as all sensation ends.

Underwater, the violent impact does not shake the Baba's grip on the Doctor.

As his last breathe slips away and the cold seeps into his body, his Mistress decides to retrieve her Favored.

The Doctor's eye, his "gift" from the Lady, is a conduit for her to our world, allowing the "Doctor" to reach out beyond the grave.

Master!

Mr. Breaker!  
Hurry, Follow Me!

Knocked unconscious by the impact with the water, he is defenseless.

WHAT  
STONE BIRD  
WANT?

IM BUSY  
HERE.

The  
Doctor's  
drowning!

SO?

The Lady  
has more  
squids down  
there.



Appealing to Lemmi's alter-ego's rage supplies the necessary motivation for him to retrieve the Doctor.

RARRRGHH! WHY DIDN'T STONE BIRD SAY THAT FIRST?

Using Heironymous' directions, Mr. Breaker leaps to the location in one tremendous jump.

His immense strength propels Mr. Breaker to the bottom in mere moments.


Frustrated, he improvises a solution.

It's much easier to break things on solid ground!

Yet the limited intellect of his cursed form halts him.

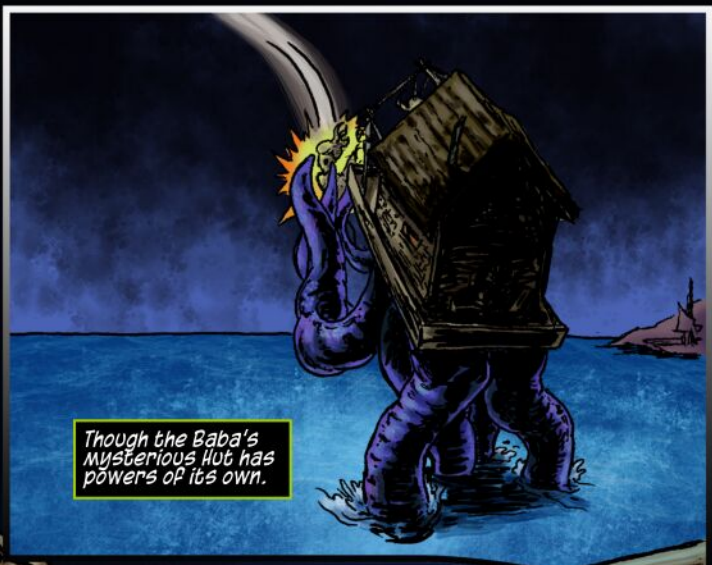
Great. Mr. Breaker is out.

The stone grip will not relent. The enchanted marble will not break.




Mr. Breaker's aim is perfect; the stone and flesh missile fly straight for the Baba's hut.

If he cannot save the doctor, or break the Baba, best to destroy what's left.



Though the Baba's mysterious Hut has powers of its own.

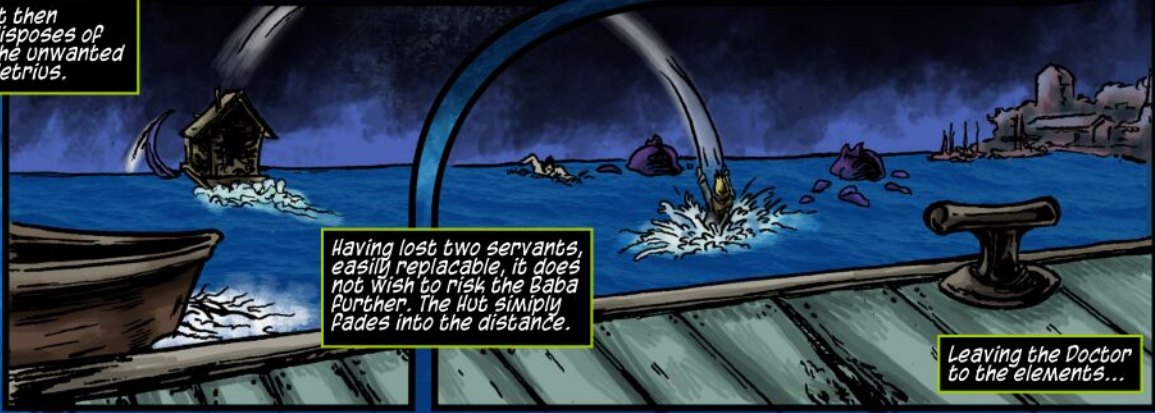


Borne from another dimension, older than even the Baba, the Hut is far more than just a dwelling, or even a power source - it is also a loyal companion.

Sensing it's owner's plight, it secretes a substance to release the Baba's grip.

Sentient in it's own right, the Hut has been with Baba Luvana for ages, a constant ally on her journeys through foreign lands and dimensions.

It then disposes of the unwanted debris.



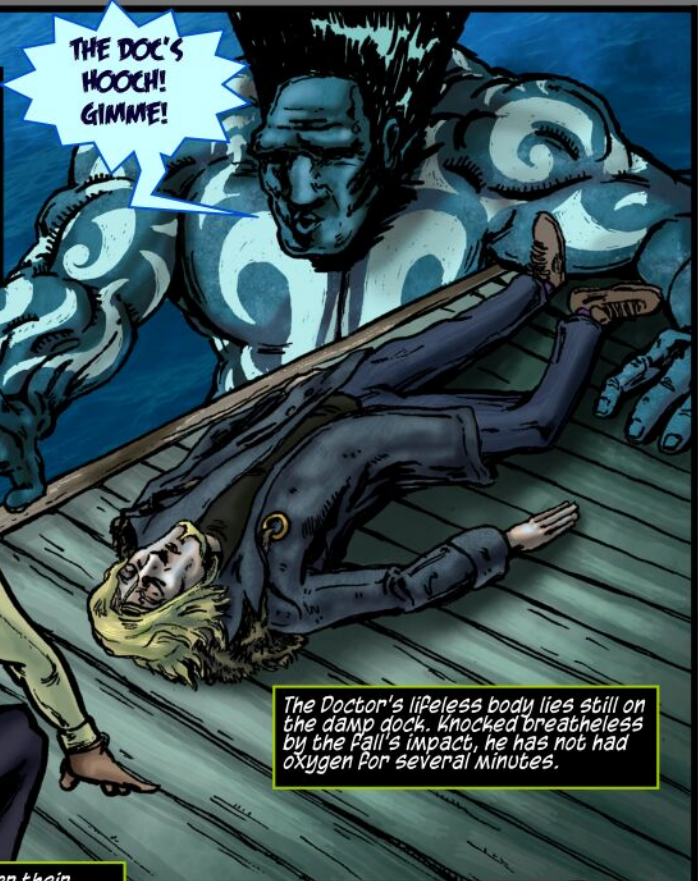
Having lost two servants, easily replaceable, it does not wish to risk the Baba further. The Hut simply fades into the distance.

Leaving the Doctor to the elements...



Everytime... I gotta pull you outta some mess.

...or his friends.



THE DOC'S HOOCH! GIMME!

You want some a'the good stuff, big guy? Here ya go.

The Doctor's lifeless body lies still on the damp dock. Knocked breathless by the Fall's impact, he has not had oxygen for several minutes.

Yet he can't escape the Lady so easily.

Per their bargain, only she will grant him death.



Ptew! Blech...

And that day is not today!



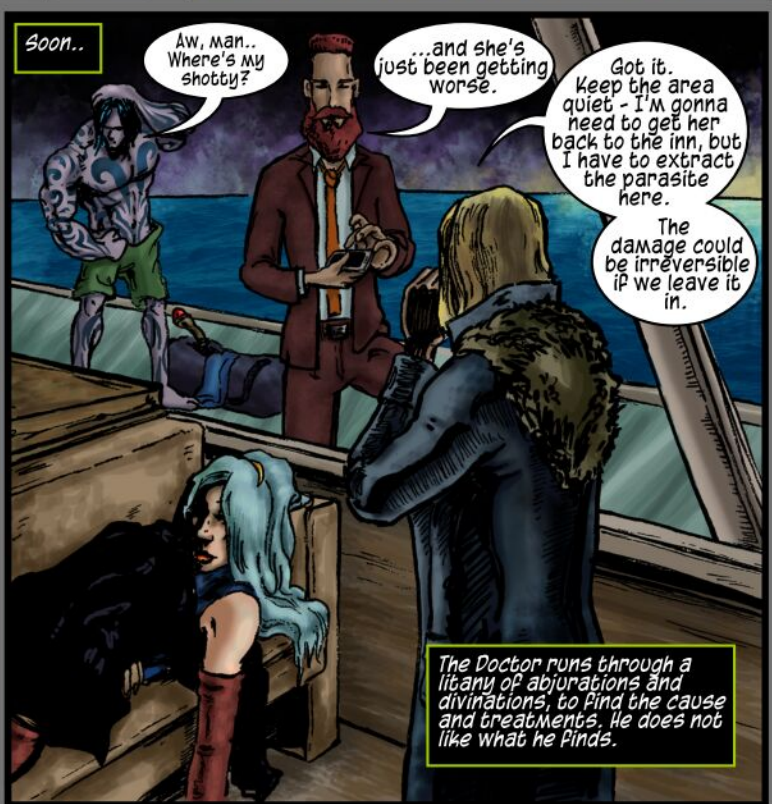
Welcome back to the land o'the living, Doc!

U all right? Kinda need your healing hands over here.

-pehw!-

Yeah, what's wrong, Zigs?

As the Doctor's elixir reverts Mr. Breaker to his normal form, Ziggy explains Wren's poisoning by Cui.



Soon...

Aw, man.. Where's my shotty?

...and she's just been getting worse.

Got it. Keep the area quiet - I'm gonna need to get her back to the inn, but I have to extract the parasite here.

The damage could be irreversible if we leave it in.

The Doctor runs through a litany of abjurations and divinations, to find the cause and treatments. He does not like what he finds.



This parasite has bonded to her spinal chord, but I can reach it.

This could get messy.

The excruciating pain wrenches the witch to consciousness with a blood-curdling cry.

DEEP SLUMBER OF CURPOZZELLO

URO'S FLESH RENDERS

Pushing past distraction, he continues.

With deft hands, the Doctor successfully extricates the worm.

Several healing spells later...

The parasite has been removed.

It feels like you took a few organs with him, Ben.

But thank you.

You're welcome, Wren. We need to get you back to the inn, though. I fear there may be lingering... effects.

Great. Let's bring the Peds home.

Wren's not bad. C'mon, Degas is here with my ride.

Easy' there, I got ya.

Thank you, Lemmi - you're a gentleman.

Heh, Just don't tell nobody.

...and then wings grew out his back, and he flew away, I told 'ya. So the witch said it was all Vulgrym?

I believe so. It seems Vulgrym is hiding his sorcery using another dimension. This specimen could be the key.

And when I find him, I am going to finish this, once and for all.

TO BE CONTINUED

# ◦ EPILOGUE

Deep below the earth, close to the very bowels of the world, an infernal prisoner struggles against his bondage. Betrayed, he rails against his captor.

BETRAYER! I will tear out your soul, Necromancer!

FREE ME!

SPLAT

Lord Vulgrim, Archwizard and Nightlord of Orcus, has held dinner with the Princes of Hell. He is unimpressed by his guest's threats.

Desist, little Inko.

NOW, DOG! I will play your soul upon the...

Patience, my Friend. Remember who holds your very existence in his hands.

Events proceed swiftly - I fear this will be one of our last pleasant sessions.

Rest assured, your part will soon be finished, and you will be freed.

No matter how much it struggles, the Fiend cannot break the mystical chains, wrought by Hephaestus himself.

Still, the devil plays one last card as the Necromancer conjures an egress.

Know this than, pitiful dog....

...Your machinations do not go unnoticed. Your doom is at hand.

Even if they do, it is far too late, now. Enjoy your remaining time, Fiend, I will return soon.

Lord Vulgrym is greeted by his senior advisor upon his return.

All is ready, I expect, Mr. Col?

Of course, Boss - I got yer' crystal right here, too.

On this special night, all the Necromancer's disciples bring their final offerings.

We might have a problem, though.

Problem?

Ya' know that doctor yer wen' tellin' me about? Well, he had his crew with him, like ya' said, but they had a silver-haired witch wid 'em.

HHMM. No matter, the Doctor is involved, that is all that matters. The witch and her Coven are inconsequential.

On this night, the Nightlord of Orcus begins the final stage of his master plan. He convenes with his acolytes in his study to receive their tribute.

Good, you are all here.

Lord Vulgrym, when are...

Patience, Juri. The new moon has risen. The time is upon us. Events will proceed swiftly from here.

We must be prepared. Dread Sisters? Boy?

Lord Vulgrym, we...

...stand ready.

We shall see, children. Now, your offerings.

I'd lov to have 'em stand ready Per' me!

Among the most ruthless and depraved practitioners of magic in the world, the Necromancer's acolytes are widely feared the world over.

Krazmov, the wild mage of Prague, is the Necromancer's own apprentice...

...The deadly twin vampire mages of La Order du Rose...

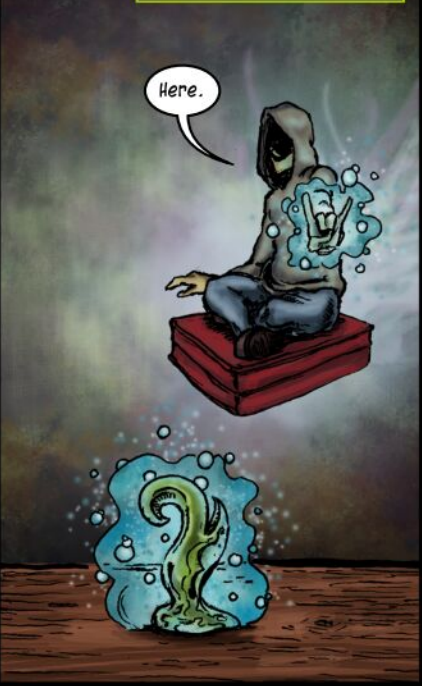
...and the mysterious Glimpse, a Mage-child with mysterious powers.



Your rock, milord.

They were both vibrant, lovely..

...souls ripe for the plucking.



Here.



These all are sufficient. Our work is nearly complete.

Now go, there is still much that needs to be done.

Yeah, yeah - yer' welcome, pops.

You ladies need a lift?

The Necromancer descends once again deep into the Earth.

Countless steps he trods, until he arrives at his destination.

The Lost Temple of Veles!

Dark sentries stir at his arrival, but pale upon his approach.

The gems, Inko.

Thought destroyed ages past, the Temple contains the remnants of power of a Forgotten Death God - necessary to contain the forces the Necromancer plans to unleash.

*Vulgryn the undying slips under the putrid waters of the Pool of Veles.*

*Long ago, Veles saw the grand work of another Foreign God, and saw the potential of his machine, blind to its creator.*

Can you Peel it, Inko?

*Veles soon stole the machine. To hide it from its creator, he used the pool so the Celtic God could not find it. For his judgemental vision could not pierce the lake's truthful waters.*

*The healthy Façade of the Necromancer falls away as he is submerged - the God's mystical waters strip away all deception.*

The machine pulses in anticipation

*And was once again, blind to the truth.*

*Hidden deep in Veles pool, an artifact of great and terrifying power lies...*

*..The Mantle of Math Mathmonwhy!*

Soon, I will walk among the mightiest - the very Gods will fear my footsteps!