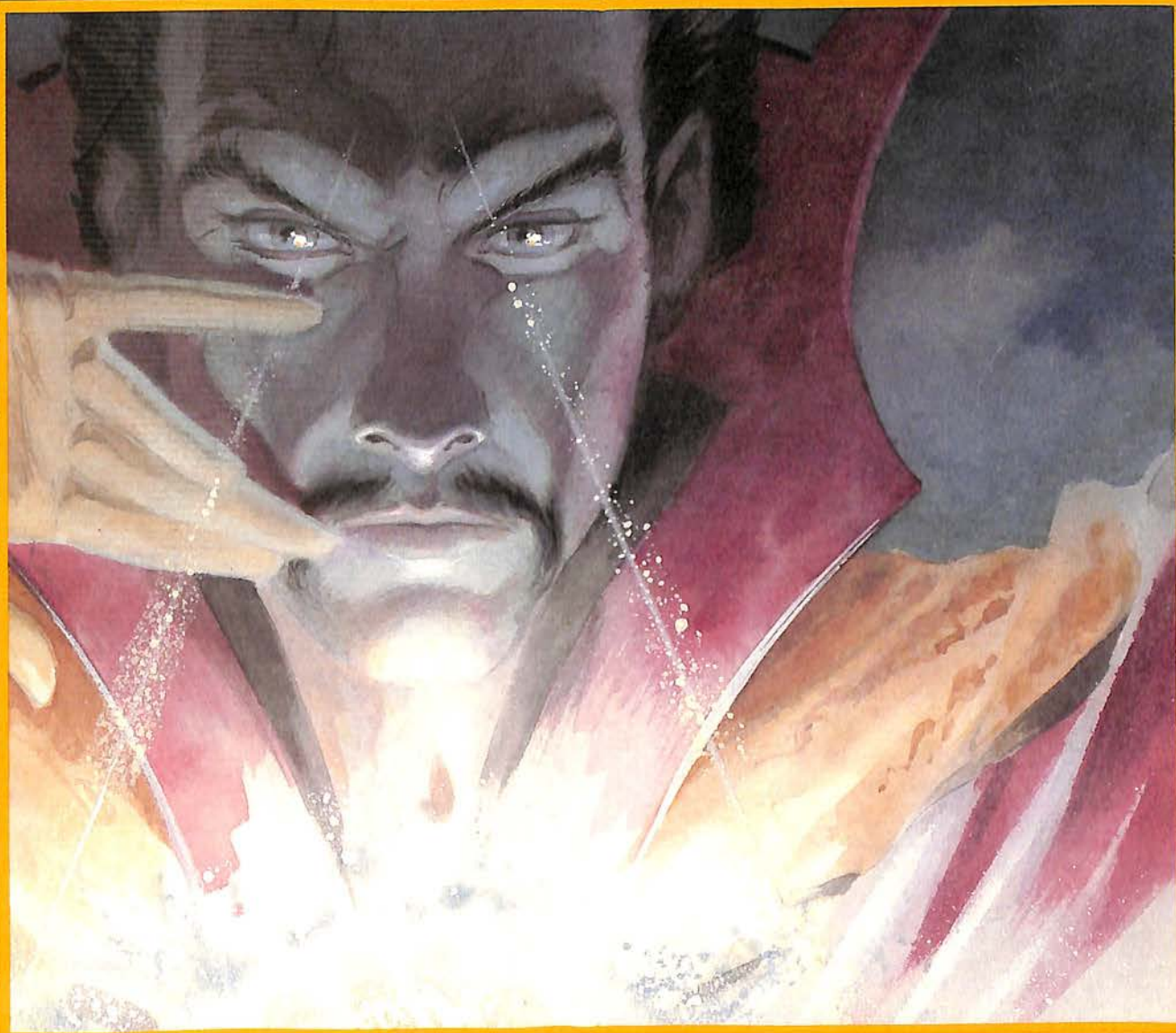


A Marvel® Graphic Novel

DOCTOR
STRANGE®

INTO

CHAMBALLA



J.M. DeMatteis



Dan Green

MARK STEVEN CORRINET
PROVOCATIO • DEFINITIO • SOLLERTIA

January 10, 1988

Mr. Eruch Jessawalli
Avatar Meher Baba Trust
King's Road
Ahmednagar, MS.
Republic of India 414001

Dear Eruch:

I apologize for it taking so long to send the copies of the "Comic Graphic Novel" dedicated to Baba. For some reason this particular issue became extremely scarce upon my return from India. I should have guessed! But just recently, I was in a small shop and there were two (2) copies waiting to be purchased.

This type "comic book" is quite popular in the United States. So I was vastly amused when I originally saw this issue come out with a story line about inner truth and a dedication to Baba. His name and teachings seem to show up in the surprising places.

I hope you, Manija, and Mehera are well. Mother sends her love to you all. If everything works out I hope to return to India sometime in late 1988 or early 1989. I pray I will find you all well.

Thank you for all your kindness and patience during my last visit. It was wonderful seeing all of you again. I look forward to the next trip all the more.

Sincerely yours,



Mark Steven Corrinet

MSC/bl

Enclosures

A
MARVEL[®]
GRAPHIC
NOVEL

DOCTOR
STRANGE

INTO

SHAMBALLA

story/script

J.M. DeMATTEIS

story/art

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For Cliff Hochberg—who deserves it.

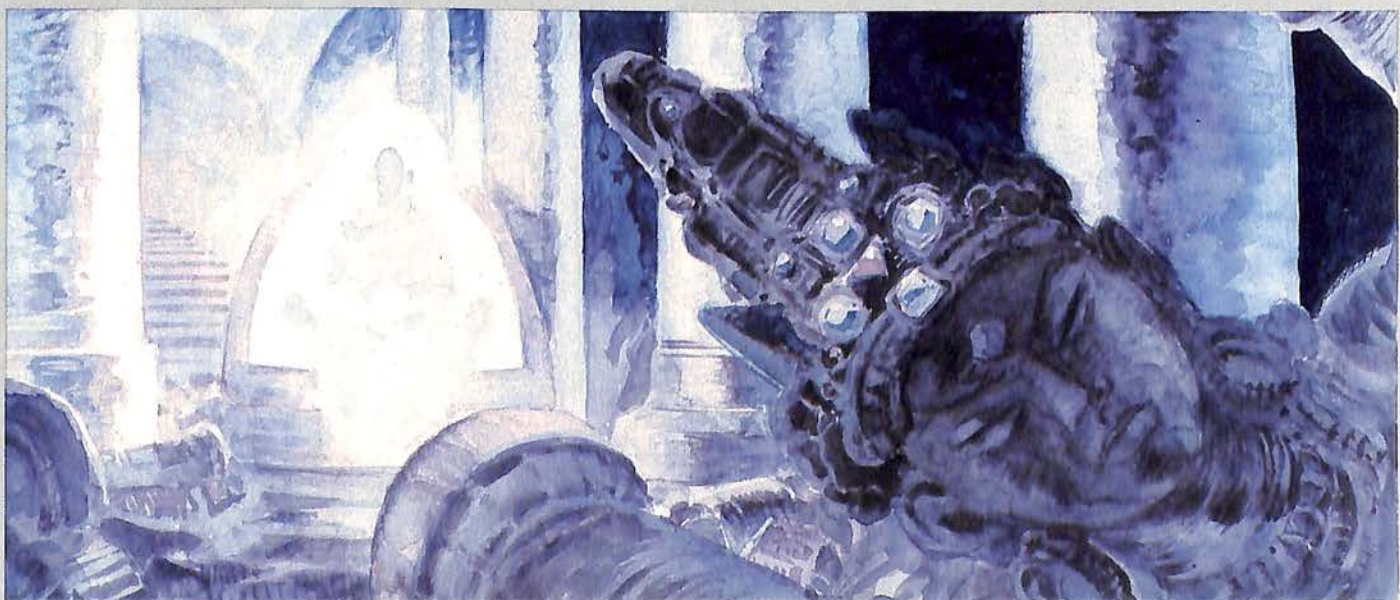
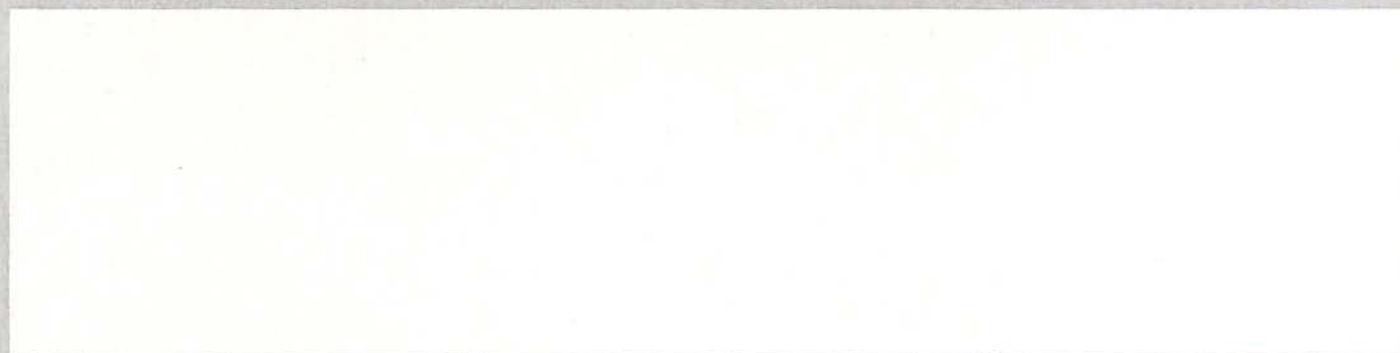
For Meher Baba—who *is* it.

J.M.D.

For Sandi, Galen, Bill, and Billy.

D.G.

1-706836





ou ascend the mountain effortlessly, your spells protecting you from the stinging Himalayan winds. There is such confidence in your step; such unyielding assurance.

How you have changed in the twenty years since you first dared these trackless peaks!

But Doctor Stephen Strange was a mere man then: bitter, spiteful, avaricious--and grim as Death. Now, so the whispered legends would have us believe, you are far more.

Now you are called--
Master of the Mystic Arts!

Since assuming this majestic title, you appear to have ripped bile, malice, and greed from your heart.

A pity you have not yet learned to smile.

So you walk on, a
dour child dancing
with the shades of
memory: the image of
the wretch you once
were reflected in the
blinding snows.



Remember: a brilliant,
vain and egotistical
surgeon who scorned
Hippocrates and
worshipped Mammon.

Remember: the automobile accident
that damaged the nerves in the surgeon's
precious hands; the icy disbelief as he
learned he would never perform an
operation again.



Ah, Stephen! How desperation gripped you then, driving you
from self-pity to alcohol and, finally, to the Orient, where you
pursued inarticulate rumors, midnight fancies, and a magic that
could cure your ruined hands.

Magic!

It suffuses this
ancient temple still!





agic!

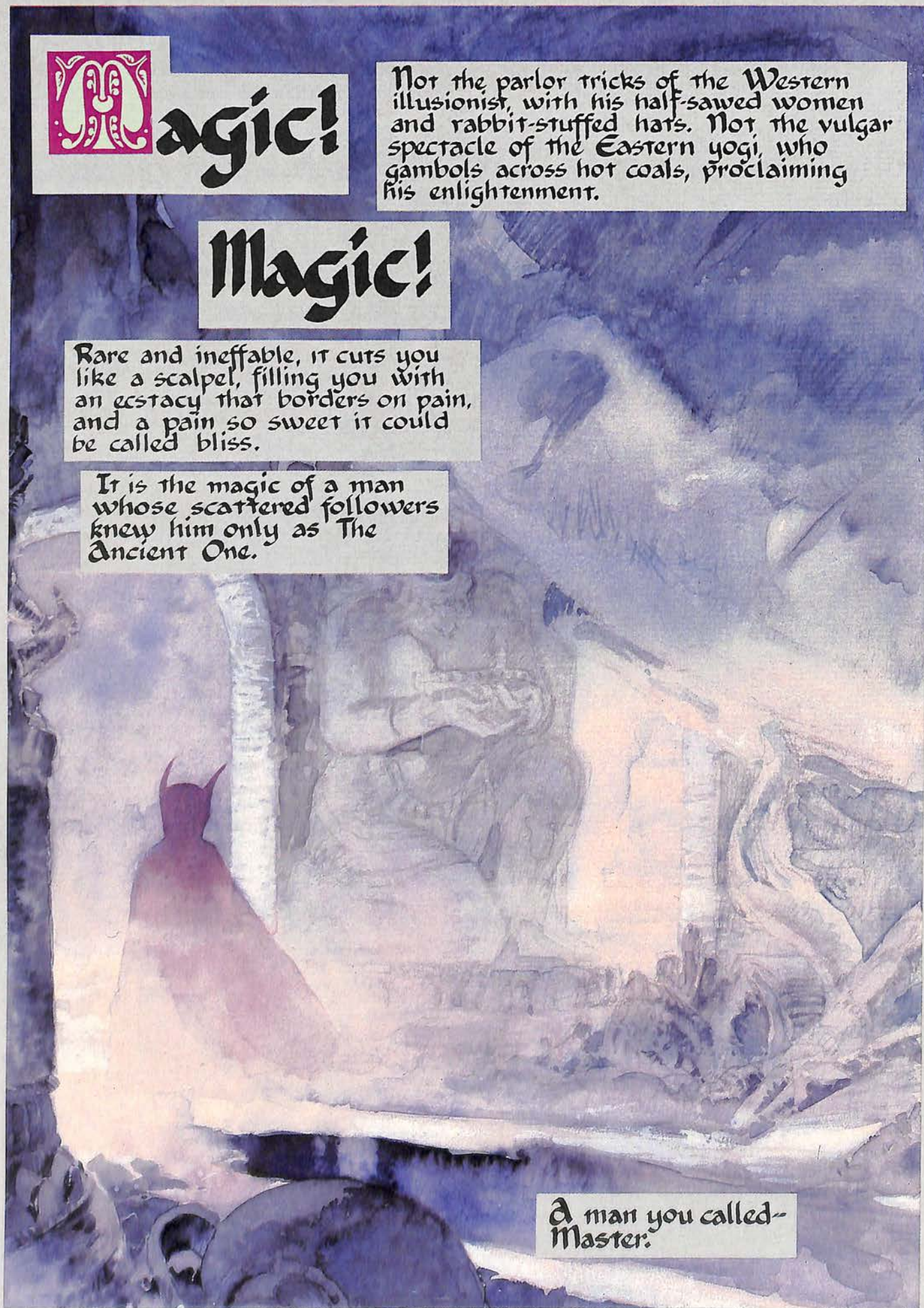
Not the parlor tricks of the Western illusionist, with his half-sawed women and rabbit-stuffed hats. Not the vulgar spectacle of the Eastern yogi, who gambols across hot coals, proclaiming his enlightenment.

Magic!

Rare and ineffable, it cuts you like a scalpel, filling you with an ecstasy that borders on pain, and a pain so sweet it could be called bliss.

It is the magic of a man whose scattered followers knew him only as The Ancient One.

A man you called-
Master.



He left you, Stephen,
left this plane of
existence, years ago--
yet you feel his
presence here as plainly
as you did when you
first staggered through
these sacred halls.

*"The Ancient One saved
me," you once told a
disciple. "He took an
animal and made him
a man. He took a man
and raised him up,
recast in perfection's
image."*

*"Oh, he gave me so
much to be thankful
for!"*



And perhaps it is to
give thanks that you
have been drawn
back here, on the
anniversary of the
Master's death.

Death? Can we call it death when
a centuries-old sadguru takes
leave of his body and merges with
Creation Itself? When an ideal man
cuts loose the limitations of the flesh
and becomes one with--All That Is?

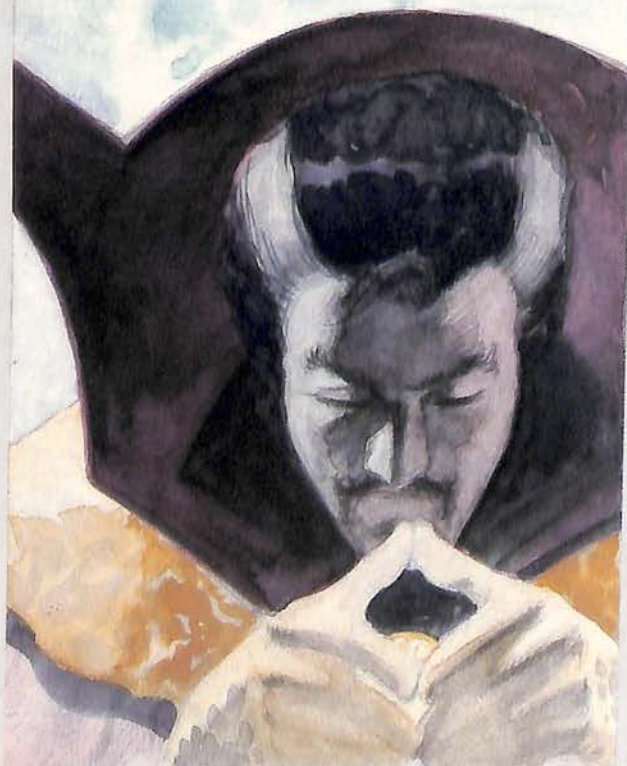


But think, Stephen:
if he is everywhere,
in every thing... then
he is here, as well!

His words echo
around you, imprinted
upon the ether; words
spoken often, and
wisely: "Only in silence,"
he used to say, "can
the deafening roar of
the infinite be heard."



In memory of what your Master was,
in honor of what he *is*, kneel once more
before him and open your heart...



...to his
deafening
silence.





ery
impressive,
Stephen!



Although deep in
trance, you remain
alert to every
breath and shadow.



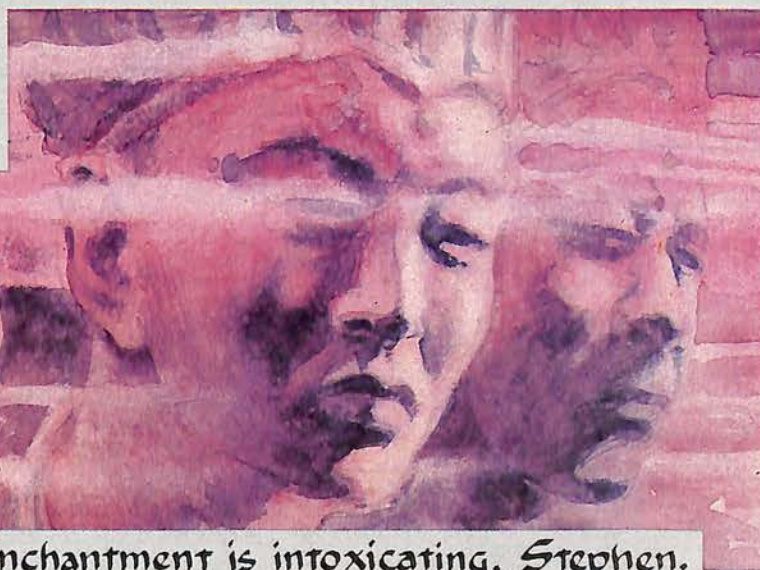
Attacked, you are
calm protection.
Attacking, you are
casual efficiency.



How simple it is for you to conjure a spell that immobilizes your adversary! Simpler still to pierce his mystic shields and reveal that the one you face--is truly *three*!

Sadhus of the mountains they are; wandering ascetics, who have spent untold years pursuing that elusive beast called *Wisdom*.

But, in his upward climb, the aspirant unlocks many doors of the soul--and there is none more dangerous than the door to the *Fourth Plane of Consciousness*, the realm from which all magicks emanate.



Enchantment is intoxicating, Stephen, even to those well-versed in its ways. Without a Master's guidance, the purest of heart becomes drunk after one sip from the cup of miracles.



So it is with these besotted unfortunates!



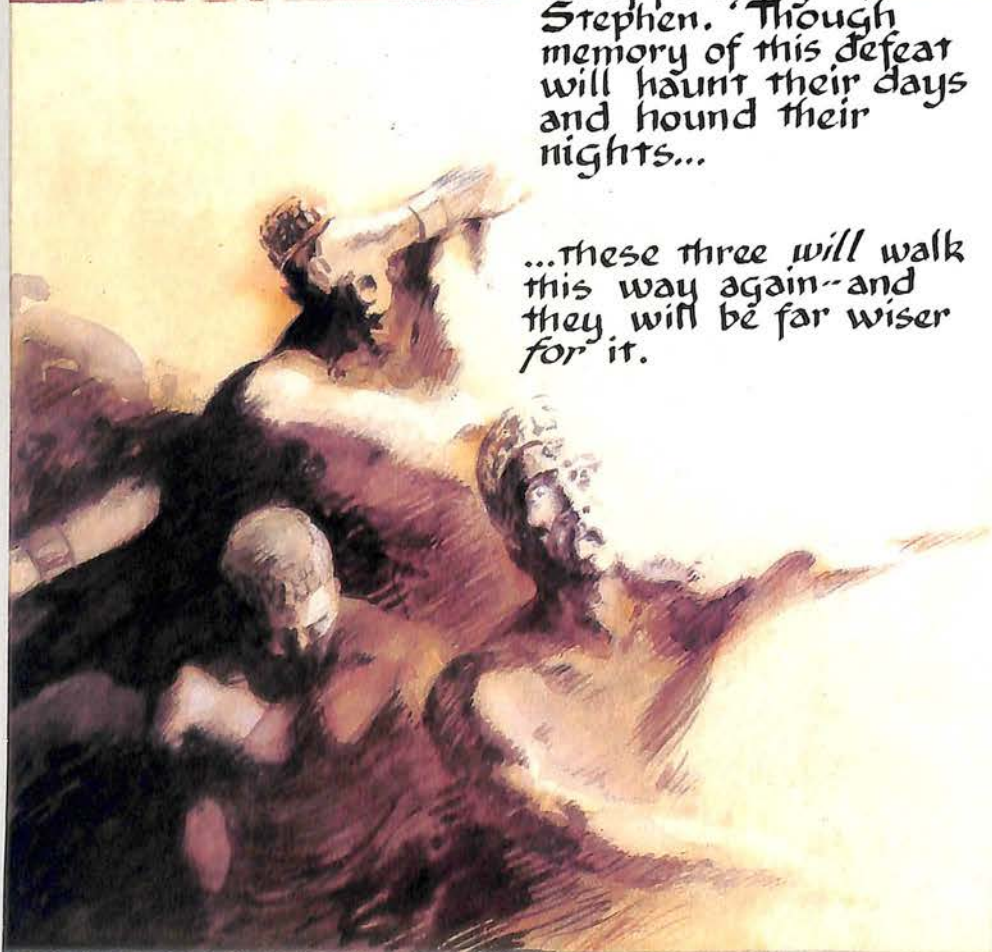
h, but the great Doctor Strange does not see them as such! He sees only fools revealed in Agamotto's light; dangerous fools, who would desecrate a shrine in their attempt to leech the Sorcerer Supreme's power!



"Shine your rays," you command the all-seeing Eye, "into every black corner of their minds! They must understand their folly! More important: They must never breach my Master's chamber again!"

I fear time will disappoint you, Stephen. Though memory of this defeat will haunt their days and hound their nights...

...these three will walk this way again--and they will be far wiser for it.

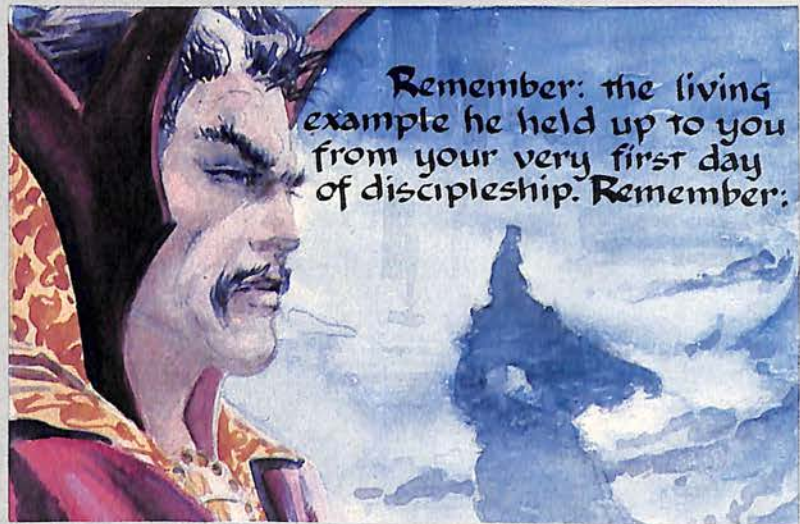




he sadhus
scamper, frightened
mice, down the
mountainside. Satisfied and
proud, you watch their
flight.



How often the Ancient
One chided you about this
elevated sense of self: "Your
ego is a formidable block of
wood! I whittle and whittle,
my blade grows dull--and
the block remains!"



Remember: the living
example he held up to you
from your very first day
of discipleship. Remember:

the unassuming votary who washed the
Master's clothes, bathed his infirm body,
ministered to his every need without a
word of thanks given or requested.

Hamir: called the Hermit; the Silent One;
the Living Shadow. He who now glides
from the shadows to greet you.

Years, like snow drifts, have blown
by since the Ancient One's ascension.
Yet Hamir has remained here, a ruin
among ruins, attending those few
souls who come on holy pilgrimage.



His voice is soft, a wind chime, and
you repress an urge to ask him to speak up. You
respect Hamir--yet something in his bland servility, his
ever-smiling eagerness to please, has always
(and even now you are ashamed to admit it)
annoyed you.

He bows before you--and your annoyance is drowned in an ocean of warm remembrance. This stooped little man--yellowed, like an old book, with age--is a link to the Master; to your days of clumsy, callow *exhilarating* apprenticeship.



So you strain to hear him, at first bewildered by the slow parade of whispers. Then you see the shrouded object held in palsied hands, decipher two words: "Master" and "gift."



A gift from the Master, you finally realize; left by him--for you!--years before his passing, with instructions for its presentation on this day alone! A blessing, you think, plucked like a rabbit out of Time's hat! A...




ew York City.
Greenwich
Village. Sanctum.
Security. Confusion.

...box?

a box.

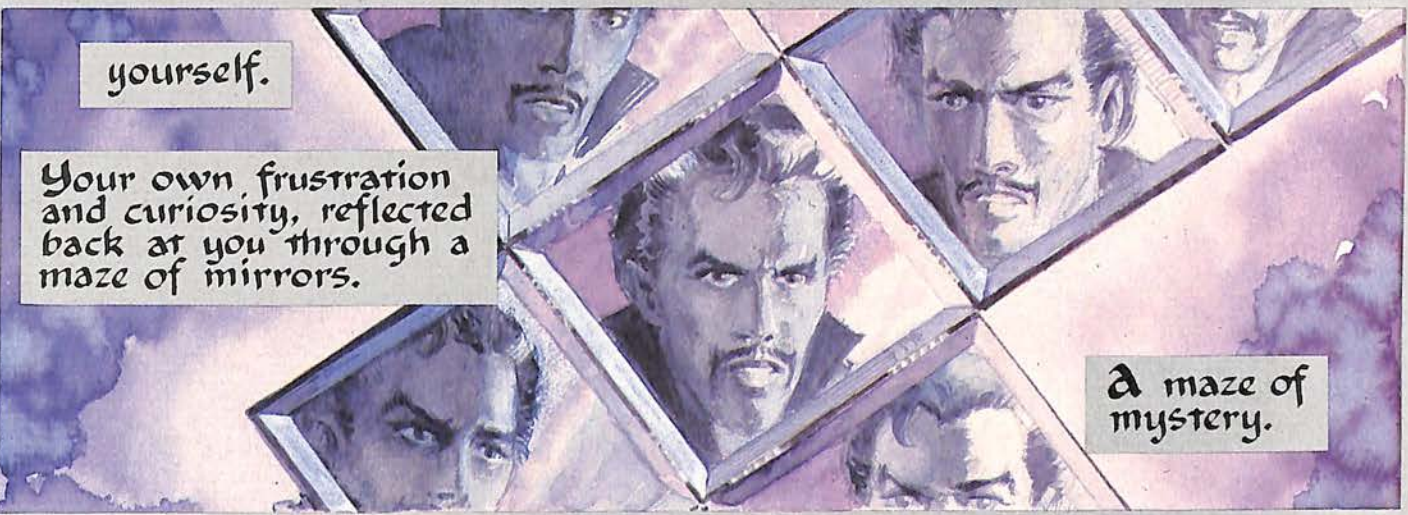


For three hours you have examined it from every vantage point--yet you've sensed no magickal emanations; no latent spells; no astral messages.



So you begin again.
Slowly. Slowly.

The outside is carved wood, simple and unadorned. No inscriptions. No runes gauged into its surface. A gentle spell to turn it back on its hinges and you find:



yourself.

Your own frustration
and curiosity, reflected
back at you through a
maze of mirrors.

A maze of
mystery.



Why, Stephen?

Why would the Ancient
One set this aside for
you and then leave no
clues to its meaning?
Why was Hamir ordered
to keep the box hidden
until now?

WHY?



*"No secret," you think,
"is impenetrable. For
every spell, there is a
counterspell." Yet
both secret and spell
continue to elude you.*



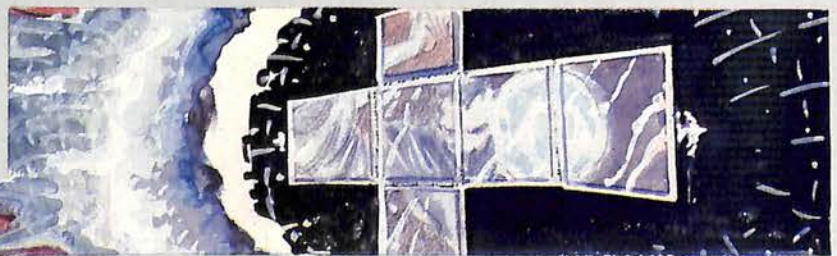
So you wander the streets as you did in your days of drunken dereliction;
wander in search of a stubborn answer that refuses to bend to your will.



*The man of old
would have
retreated into the
bottle; the mystic
of today returns
to his task with
renewed vigor.*



*"There is no grimoire," you
say aloud (for your own
benefit--or are you trying
to impress the box itself?),
"I haven't studied. No
incantation, however
elaborate, has failed to
pass my lips.*



*"Men call me wizard!
Wonder-worker!
Warlock!*



*"Sorcerer
Supreme!"*



Failure.





editation; rumination;
lucubration; frustration.
For four weeks now you
have scoured arcane volumes
from *The Book of Asmodeus* to
The Secret Teachings of Zoroaster..
with no success...



...exhausting every
enchantment you've ever
known--and a hundred
more, newly learned.

Forty days pass--and
forty nights: You have gone
without sleep; without food;
without satisfaction.
Without pride.



"What are you, magic
mirror?" you muse.
"My temptation? The
devil--mocking my
achievements, seducing
my weaknesses?"
You stare into its
glassy depths and see
your every base desire
(ten thousand horrible
demons!) reaching out
to you.



You reach back; then
withdraw; then scream:
"I hate you!"

"You're not a talisman or a
charm! You don't harbor
any impenetrable secrets
or unfathomable spells!"





"You're just a worthless mirror!"

*And, in destroying
it, you feel ashamed;
and, in your shame,
you see yourself;
and, in seeing...*



...you understand!



"Of course, Master!" you cry. "Of course! It is what it is! Just a silly, maddening, absolutely ordinary..."




"Oh...crap", Stephen? Such a mundane utterance from the Sorcerer Supreme! I'd expected "*By Cyttorak's Crimson Bands!*" or "*Vipers of Valtor!*" or-- what is your other favorite?--ah, yes: "*Shades of the Seraphim!*" But... "Oh...crap"? Most unimaginative.

Although I suppose you can be forgiven this slight transgression under the circumstances. Being suddenly thrust, with no warning, into a dimension as peculiar and powerful as this, could shake even the mightiest oak to its roots.

Yet, in your confusion and alarm, there is a gentle elation, as well. You grasp for meaning--and find personal glory. "*I have passed the Ancient One's test,*" you surmise. "*In realizing that the mirror was just that and nothing more, I have had the gateway to a new realm of Being opened to me!*"

An interesting interpretation of events--but you, of all men, know that Reality has more skins than a snake: each skin a new truth, each truth a new illusion. Hear me, Doctor Strange: God is a magician, Reality His trick, and it is all done with...

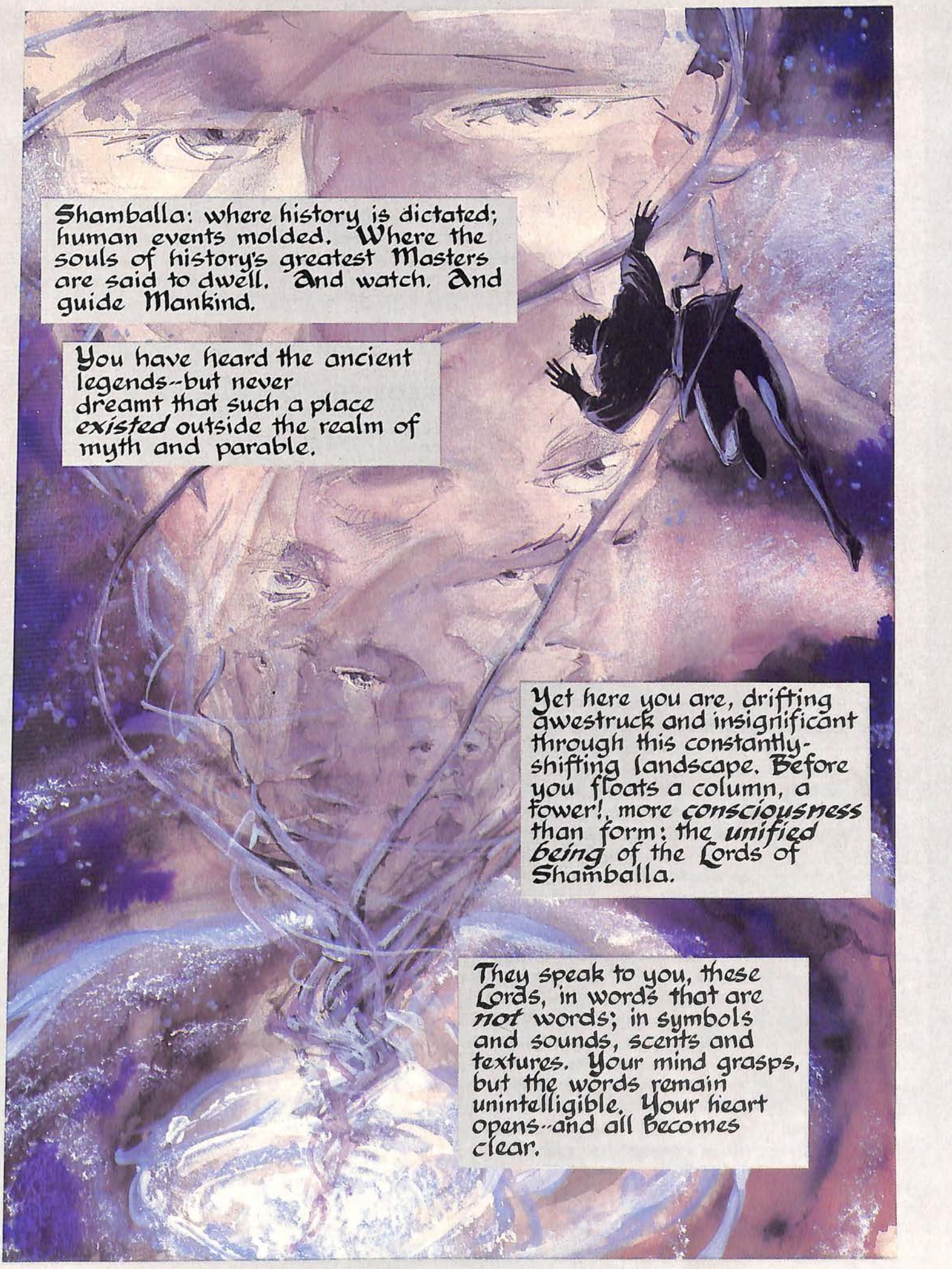


...mirrors!

The universe becomes glass around you:
light and heat and white infinity! A chorus
of voices thunders in your mind; your
consciousness splinters; your soul cracks.

There is fullness, then
void. And, from the void,
a word;

CHAMBALLA



Shamballa: where history is dictated; human events molded. Where the souls of history's greatest Masters are said to dwell. And watch. And guide Mankind.

You have heard the ancient legends--but never dreamt that such a place existed outside the realm of myth and parable.

Yet here you are, drifting awestruck and insignificant through this constantly-shifting landscape. Before you floats a column, a tower! more *consciousness* than form: the *unified being* of the Lords of Shamballa.

They speak to you, these Lords, in words that are *not* words; in symbols and sounds, scents and textures. Your mind grasps, but the words remain unintelligible. Your heart opens--and all becomes clear.

"We call upon you," say the wordless words, "to perform a special task."

(What is it you feel, inside you, around you?)

"The Earth stands upon the verge of a Golden Age: an era when selfishness and contention will vanish; when selflessness and harmony will abound."

(A presence--so bright, so strong! A magic--so familiar!)

"But this Golden Age must be preceded by disaster; purification; purge. What prophets, religions, saints, sects and seers have foretold, the Lords of Shamballa now decree:"

(The same magic that touched you all those weeks ago in the Himalayas!)

"A cataclysm beyond imagining will leave this world a ravaged wasteland, burying the Old Humanity and birthing the New!"

(His magic! The Ancient One's magic!)

"We have chosen you, Doctor Strange, as our agent. There is a spell you must cast--a three-part spell, which only an adept of your skill can complete. When it is done, the final cataclysm will be unleashed--and the Golden Age will dawn."

("The Ancient One," you realize, "is here! When he left his body, he must have been absorbed into the Cosmic Body of the Shamballese Lords!")

"Behold!" command the Lords--and you see the Earth consumed by fire and disease! "Behold!"--and you watch three-fourths of humanity die!

Awestruck, you witness the slow rebuilding--as the scattered survivors sow the seeds from which a new race springs; a race that ultimately attains the Perfection humankind has so long sought.

"Behold!"--and Paradise is revealed!

Why, then, do you feel sickened by this glimpse into Man's future? Why do you want to turn and run--abandoning the mystic for the human?

"O, Master!" you call--unsure where to focus your eyes. "I cannot do this! Is any paradise worth so much destruction...so much death?"

Then you hear language as you know it--gentle, unshakeable, familiar: "Have faith, child. Do what is asked of you."



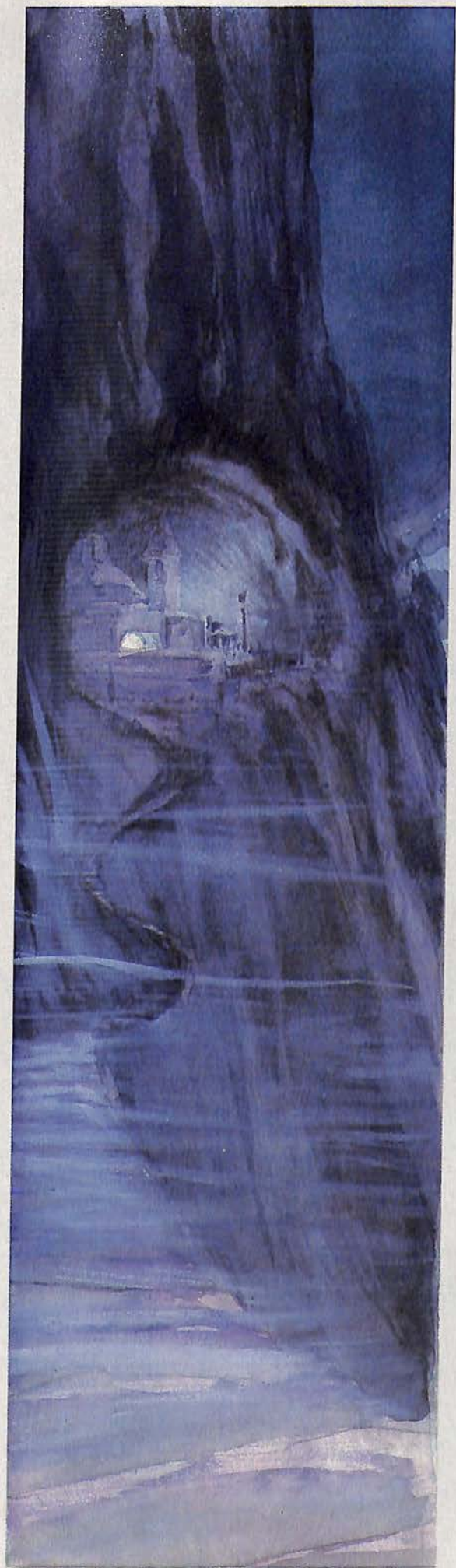
"Master?"

*"Say yes, child.
Say--"*

"Master!"

"... yes."







Think: It is called the *ley system*--a series of invisible grids that crisscross the globe, connecting primal *power spots*; earthly centers of divine energy.

Think: The ancient priests and sorcerers, using *Geomancy*--the *study* of the *ley system*--built their temples and burial grounds, observatories and worship places, *upon* those power spots.

Think: The flow of energy through the *ley lines* has always reflected and fed Man's inner state. Now--so the *Shamballese Lords* say--those energies are sluggish; nearly dormant. A cosmic artery, clogged by centuries of spiritual decay.

Think: That artery must be repaired; the blood of the Earth must flow freely. Only when the power spots inter-connect and merge--as they did in ancient times--can Man evolve to the next level of consciousness.

Here: in the jungles of Yucatan, where Cortez trampled the Aztecs, and *Quetzalcoatl's* power still permeates the land...

...the surgery begins.

Ah, but the great surgeon is no longer saving *lives*--now he is saving *souls*; and, to do it, he must obliterate three-quarters of the world!



This thought is too much for you, Stephen, and you push it away--concentrating on the here and now: on the Eye of Agamotto as it pierces the jungle gloom, revealing a hidden...



...truth: a pyramid--buried here for centuries. Decomposed corpse of a dead civilization.



And, 'though the surgeon may view death as an irrevocable end...





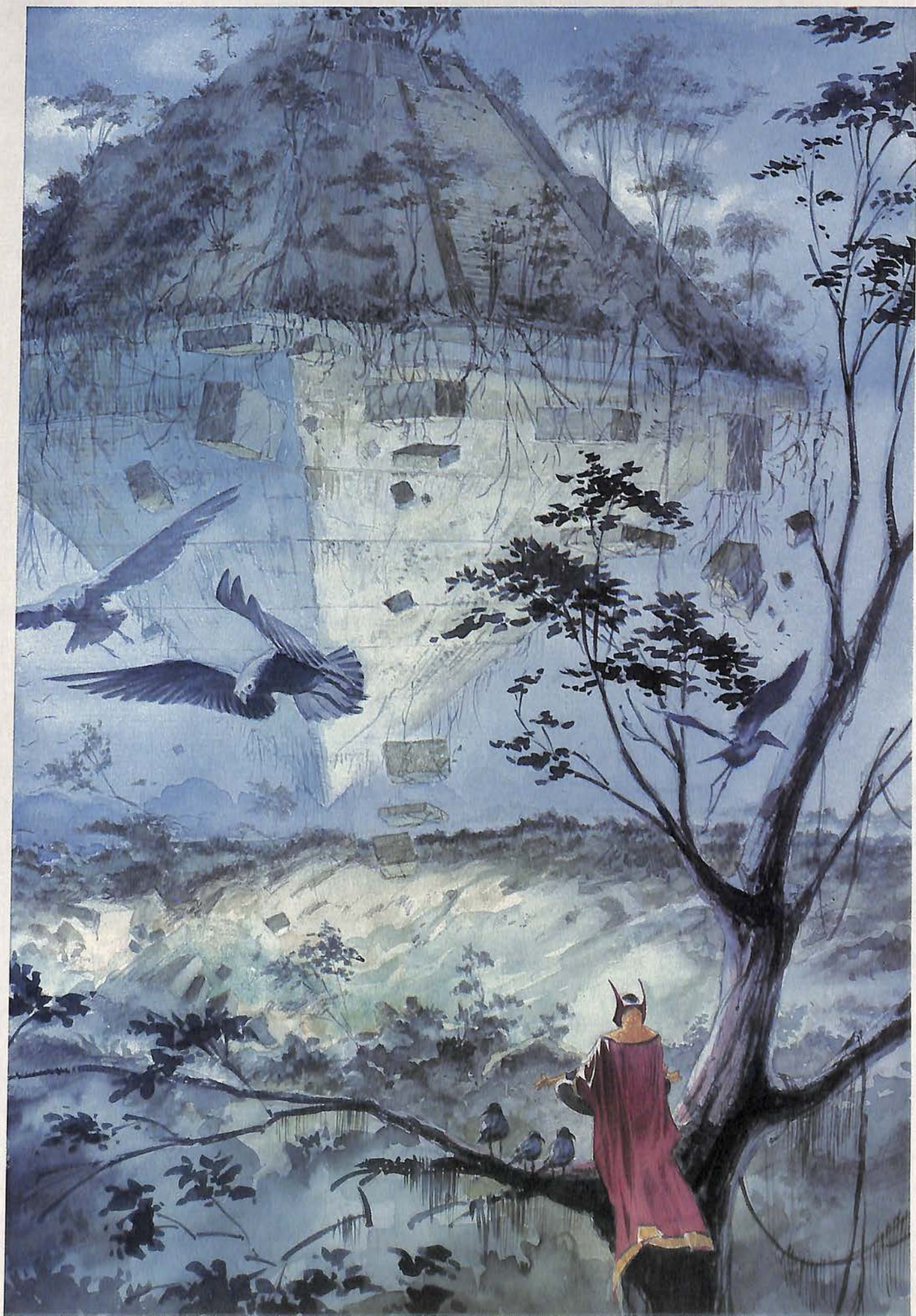
*...the savior sees with
other eyes.*

*A careful gesture, a whispered incantation--and dead truth rises from
the jungle floor! But, like every truth, this one is many-sided: a
pyramid above...*

...and below!

*Within lies the first fragment of a spell old as Creation; a spell that--
once all three fragments have been reactivated--will set the ley-
energies free...*

*...bringing forth
Armageddon and
apotheosis.*





Armageddon! The enormity of what you have been asked to do--the simple human *horror* of it--fills you with renewed apprehension--and you struggle to contain it. "I felt the Ancient One's presence among the Shamballese Lords," you remind yourself. "I know he would never lead me onto the wrong path."

And yet...



You recall the many times the Master told you that birth and death, joy and suffering, *all the world*--is just a dream: the play of *Maya*, Queen of Illusion. "It is the undying *Reality* behind the Illusion," he said, "that sustains us...unites us...lifts us out of *Maya's* clutches..."

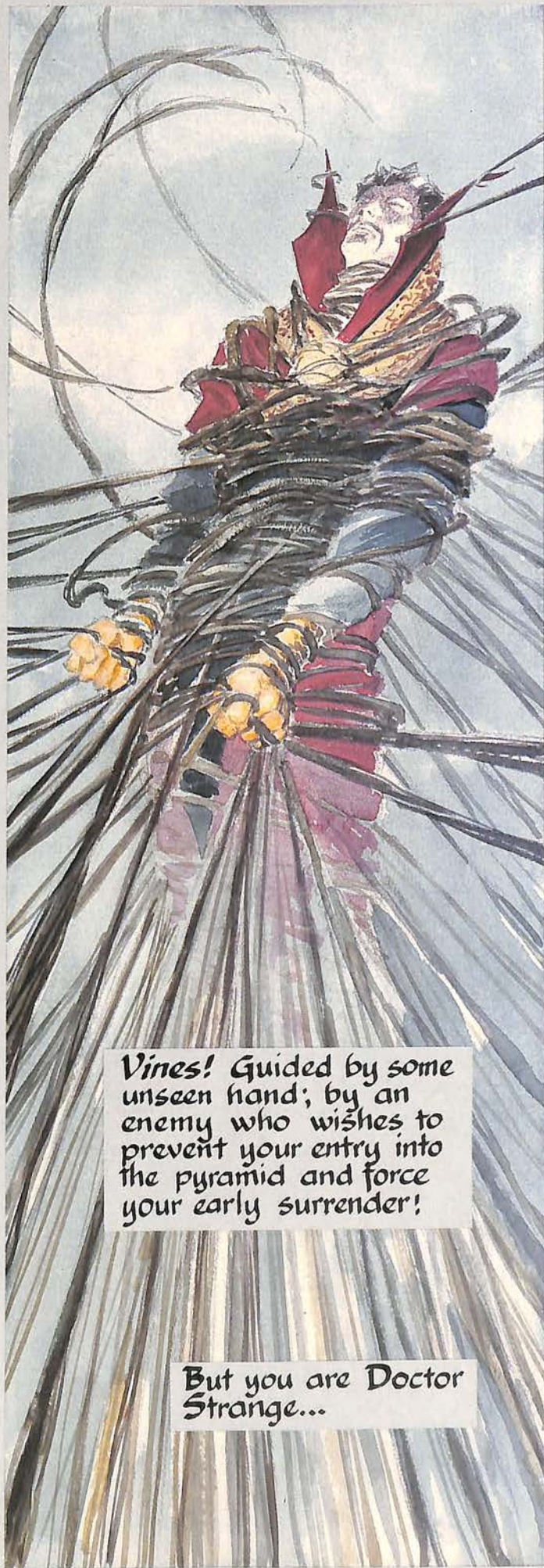
And yet...

As if in response to your own doubts, shapes emerge from shadow... snake forward... ensnare you!



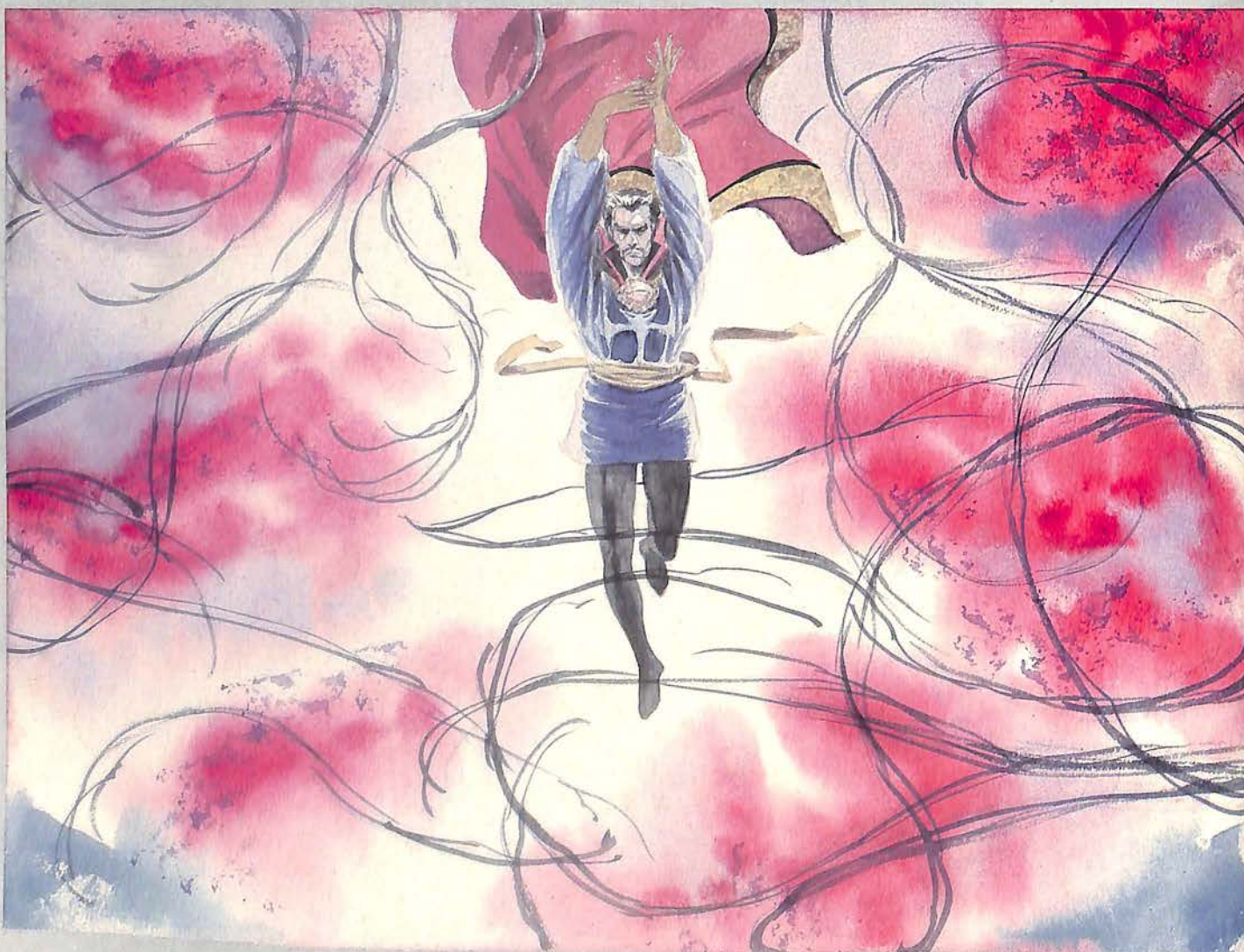
Vines! Guided by some unseen hand; by an enemy who wishes to prevent your entry into the pyramid and force your early surrender!

But you are Doctor Strange...





...and you will
never surrender.





minor bit of sorcery
and the vines recede;
a doorway at the base
of the pyramid slides
open in response.

And you wonder: Perhaps this
wasn't an attack, but a *test*--
designed, ages ago, by the
pyramid's architects. A guarantee
that only the *worthy* would
enter...

...and bathe in the light...

...of Ancient Days.

The spell fragment floats there on the air,
waiting for your touch. Floats as it's supposedly
floated for *twelve thousand years*; since *Atlantis*
and *Mu* were washed away, the last Golden
Age drowning *with* them.

Survivors from those
lost continents are
said to have spread
out across the Earth;
a colony of Atlanteans
settling here, where
they built these
pyramids. These
temples.

These roadsigns to Perfection.

Concentrate: on ether, air
and form; on transmutation
of energy.

Conjure: two palettes
of mystic force; two
spheres that will
merge with the
fragment, *add* to it,
revive it.



Act:



now!



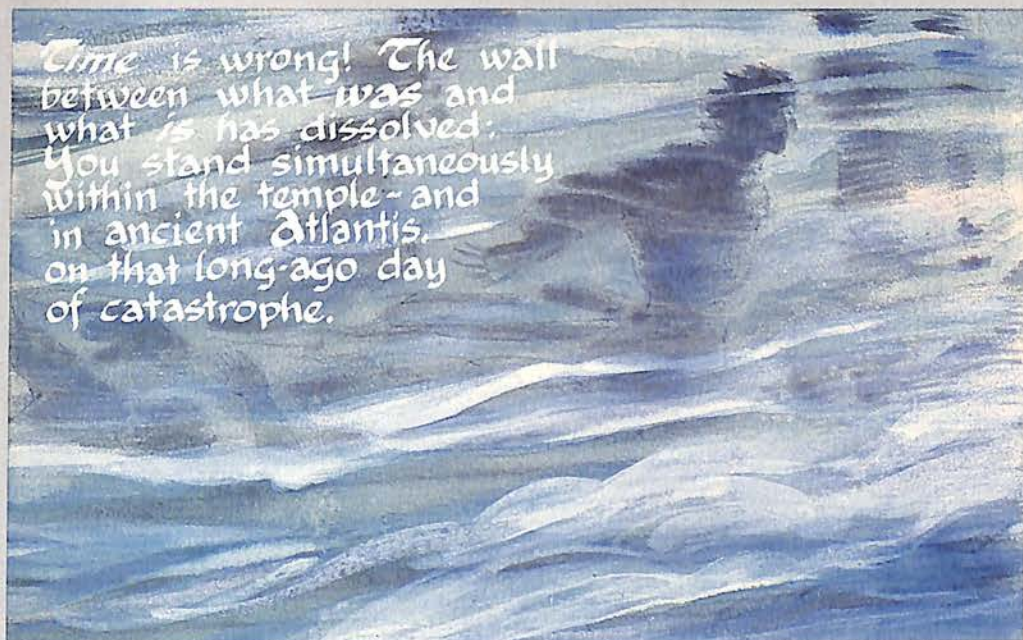
The spell responds!
Awakens! Re-forms!



But something
is **WRONG!**



Time is wrong! The wall between what was and what is has dissolved. You stand simultaneously within the temple—and in ancient Atlantis—on that long-ago day of catastrophe.



The end of an Age is no longer a vague, intellectual notion, but a **fact**: You hear the shrieks of torment, feel the **agony** and **desperation** of fate's victims.



And Doubt, that scaled, fish-eyed thing, swims again to the surface of your mind; grips you; drags you down.



You are **drowning** in Time and Doubt, Stephen! You are **dying**!

NO!

THIS WORLD IS ILLUSION! TIME IS ILLUSION! THE ILLUSION CAN BE--

..TRANSCENDED!

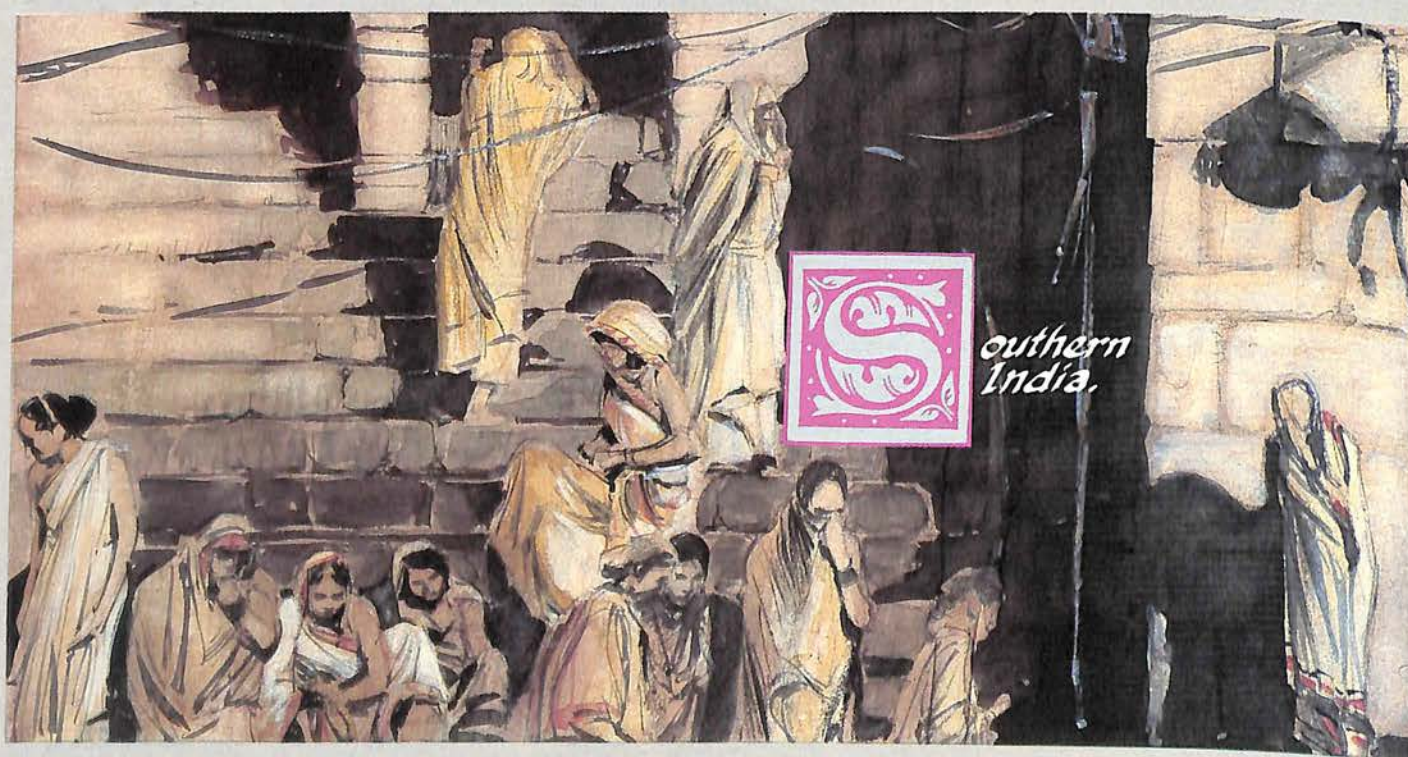


So Time's tidal wave ebbs. So the first spell fragment is restored. You are triumphant. You are proud.

But your pride is a **blindfold**: it blocks your view as you stagger on toward the edge...



...of a great abyss.



Here, in this
Hindu temple,
fifteen miles outside
Bangalore, the
second of the
three spell
fragments rests;
left, so the
Lords of Shamballa
say, by the
survivors of
Mu, the fathers
of Vedic
wisdom.



You are certain now that what happened in Yucatan was part of a concerted attack...

...the work of someone--perhaps a group--attempting to thwart the Lords and prevent Man's evolutionary leap.

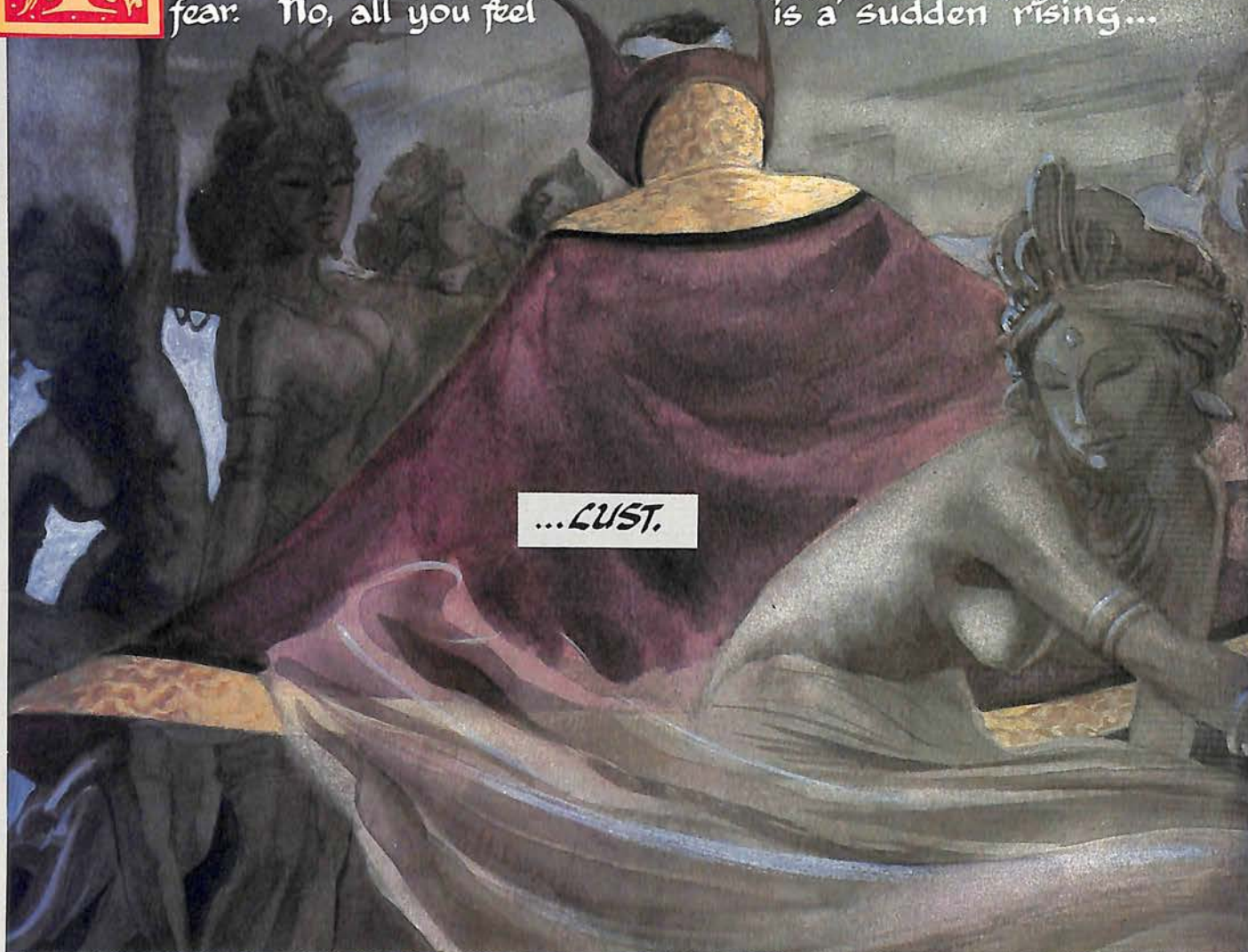
"Whoever they are," you reflect, "I beat them easily enough. They'll think twice before trying again." So you forget them and focus on the task at hand, discovering that it is *difficult* to focus when surrounded by such rare and delicate...

...*beauty*: in the west, a thing often flaunted; marketed like some cheap perfume. *Beauty*: Ah, but in the East it hides, diffident, behind a veil, waiting for the song of Krishna's flute. Waiting for the call...

...to AWAKEN!



ou study them as they encircle you--dancing and delighting!--
and, although you sense that your unseen opponent is
behind this miraculous transformation, you feel no
fear. No, all you feel is a sudden rising...

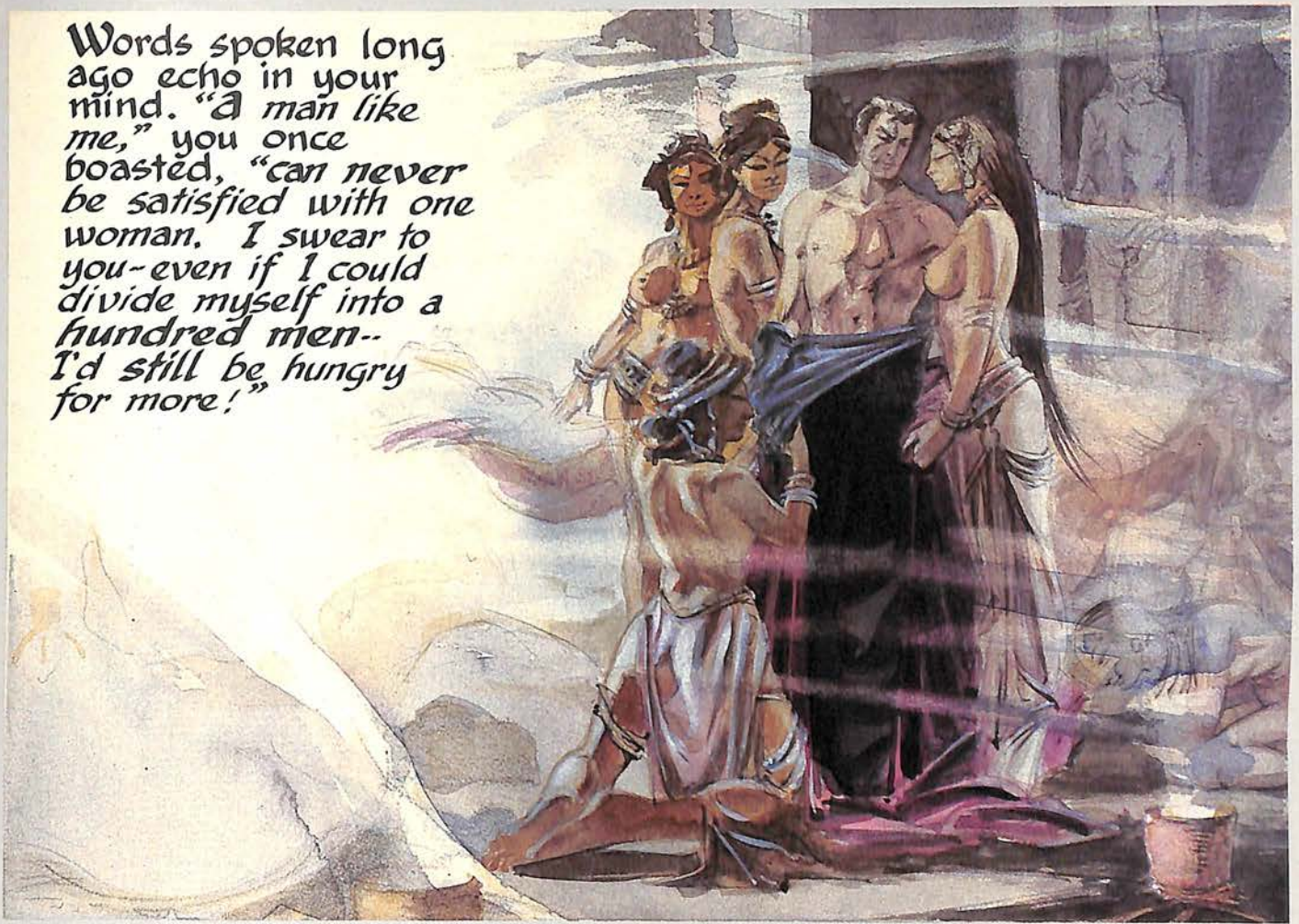


Years of discipline and austerity drop away; the shadow of a man you
once were enfolds itself about you. You are no longer Doctor Strange
the dispassionate mystic...

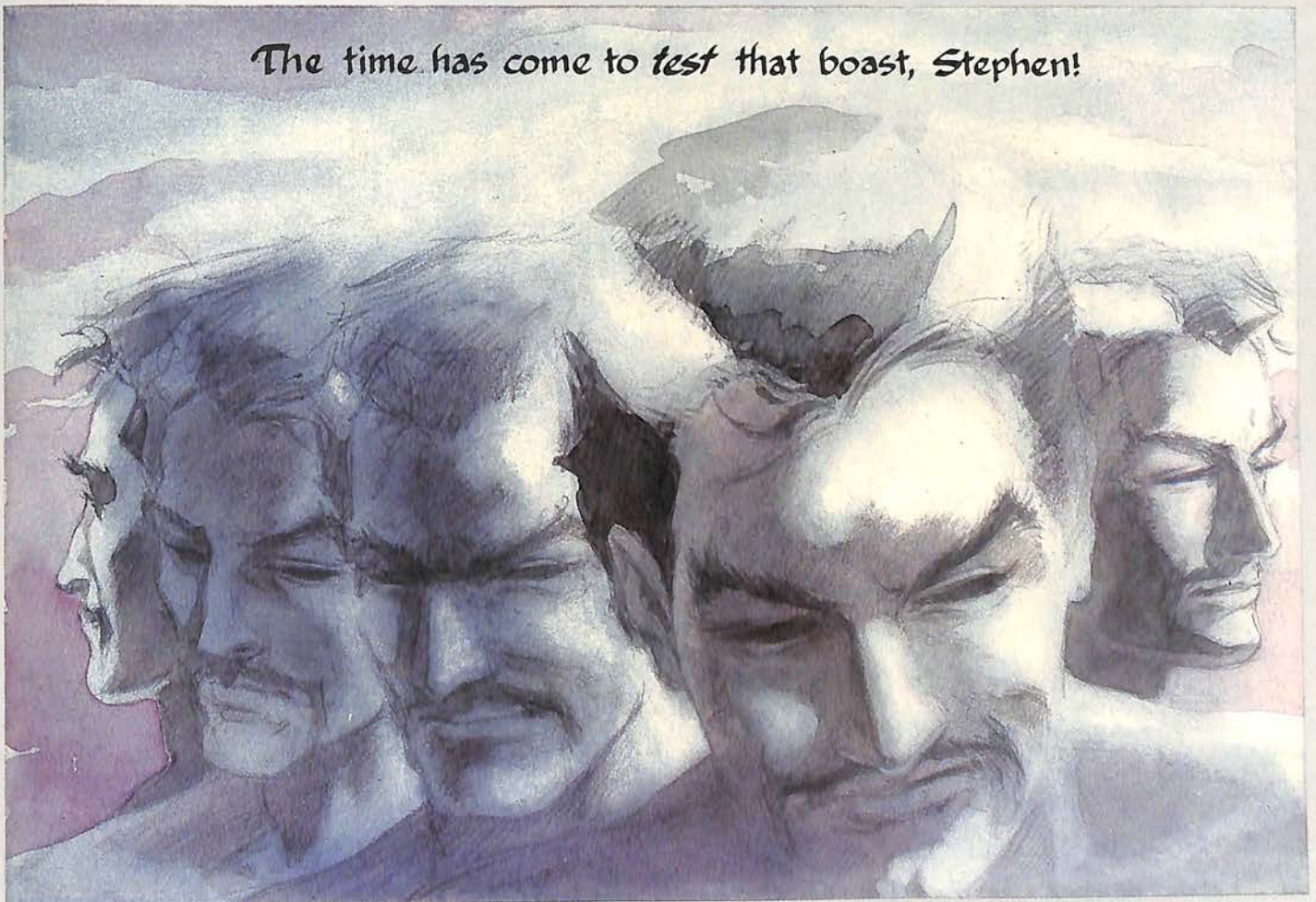


...you are Doctor Strange--the vain
and egotistical! The arrogant
surgeon who sees beauty--and
wishes only to *possess* it!

Words spoken long ago echo in your mind. "A man like me," you once boasted, "can never be satisfied with one woman. I swear to you—even if I could divide myself into a hundred men—I'd still be hungry for more!"



The time has come to test that boast, Stephen!



A centuries-old *Spell of Separation* is invoked--and dozens of Doctor Stranges fall into dozens of eager arms!



You are sightless now, unable to appreciate their beauty; struck blind by the light of your own consuming passion.



You give yourself over to that light, wanting nothing more than to drift here--empty-headed, empty-souled!--for an eternity; lost in the pleasures...



...of the flesh.





ight becomes
Silence
becomes
Void.

Then,
from the Void...
A PRESENCE.

Then, from the Presence...
A VOICE.

*"Remember," the voice whispers,
soft as a wind chime.
"Remember," it repeats.*

*Your own voice thunders in
response: "Go away! Leave
me alone! Let me be!"*

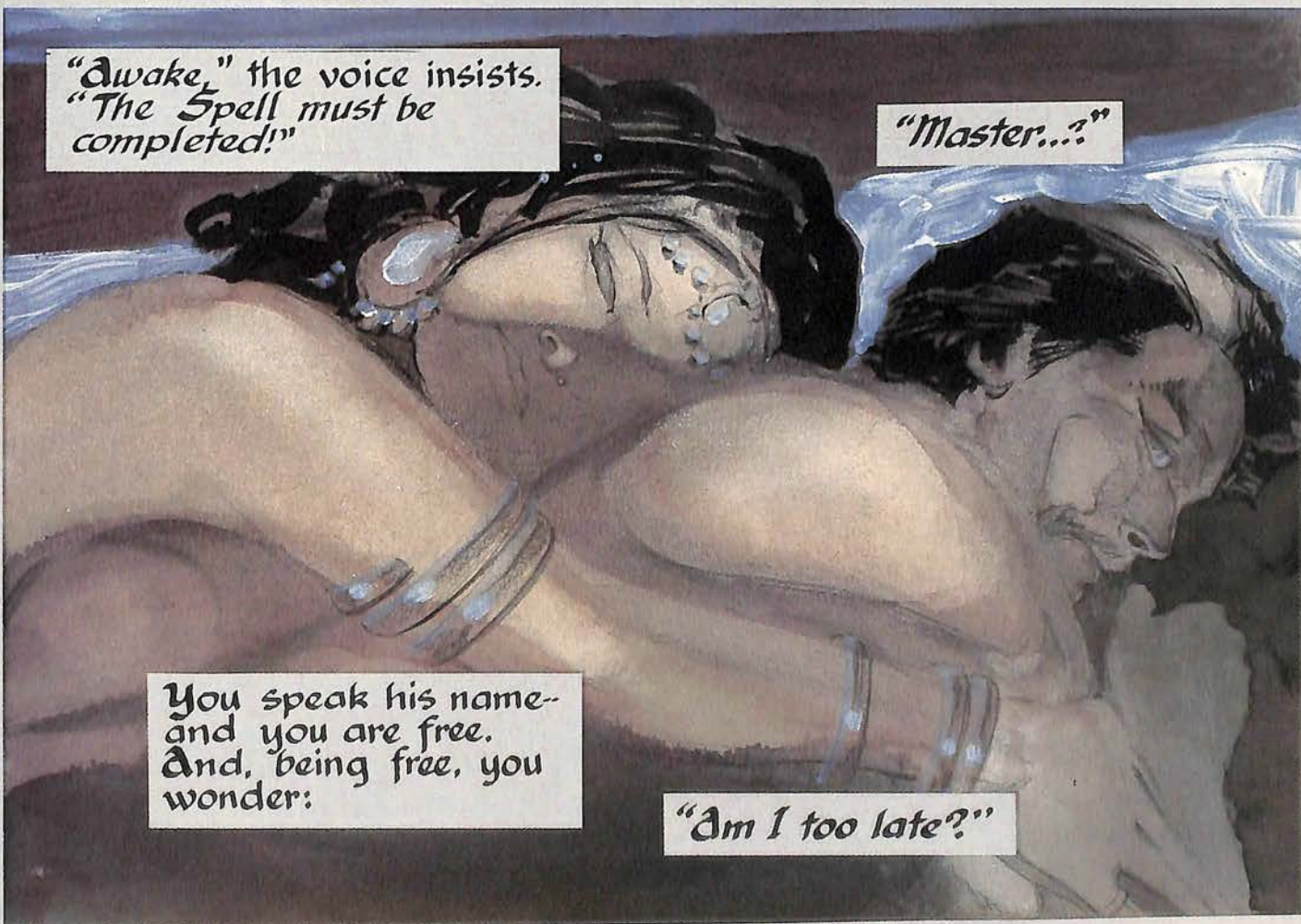


*"Awake," the voice insists.
"The Spell must be
completed!"*

"Master...?"

*You speak his name--
and you are free.
And, being free, you
wonder:*

"Am I too late?"





THIS
WORLD IS
ILLUSION!
LUST IS
ILLUSION!
THE ILLUSION
CAN BE--



Words of
confidence and
power?

Lies, Stephen!

Even as the
second spell
fragment is
revealed to you,
even as
living passion
reverts again
to stone,
you realize
that there
has been *no*
clear
victory here.
For you
know how
close you
came...

*...to
utter
failure.*



So weave your
necromantic
tapestries,
Sorcerer Supreme!
Restore the
ancient fragment
to full power!
But be sure
to check
the *tremble* in
those nimble
surgeon's
hands.
Be sure...



...to remember.

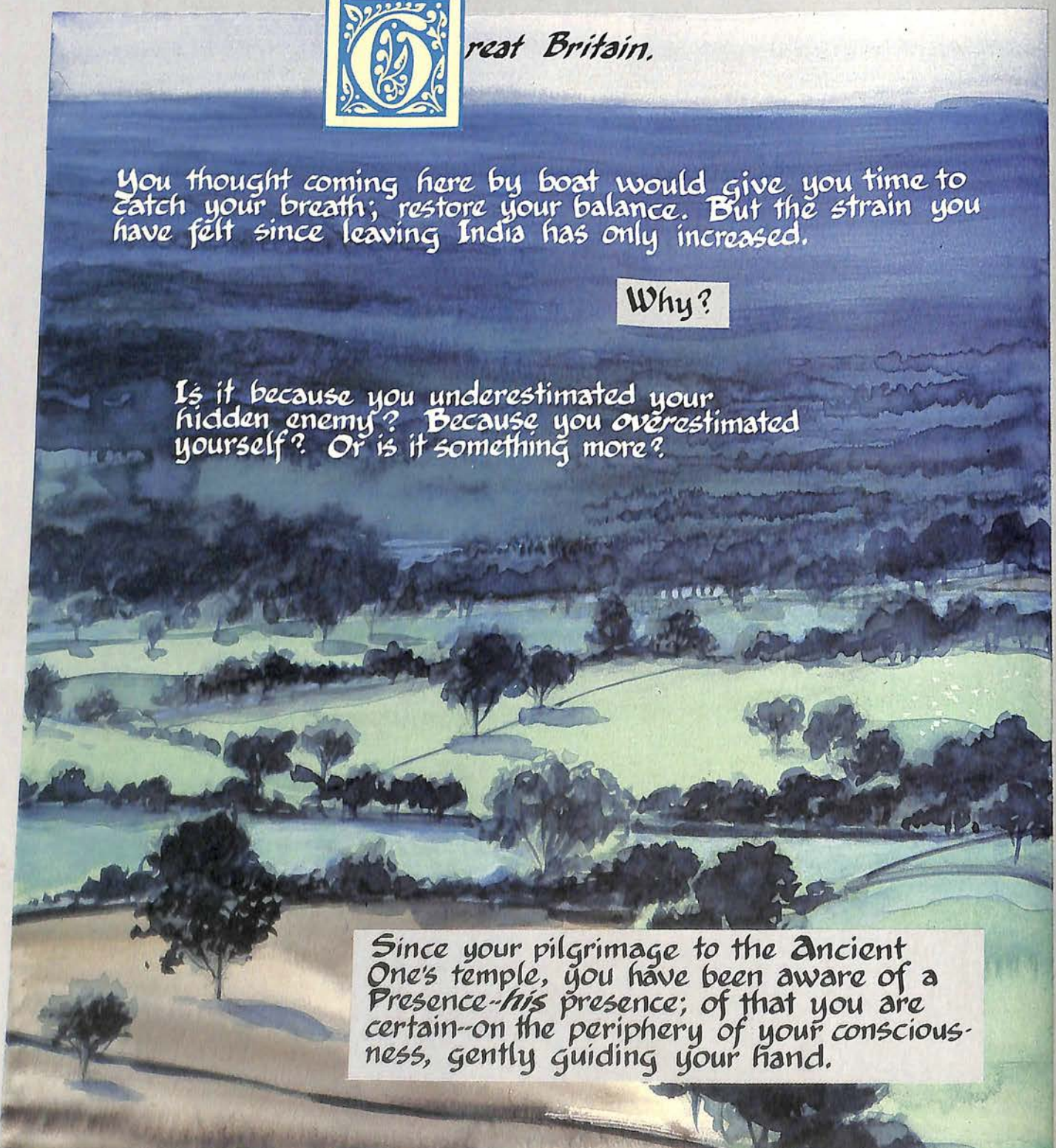


reat Britain.

You thought coming here by boat would give you time to catch your breath; restore your balance. But the strain you have felt since leaving India has only increased.

Why?

Is it because you underestimated your hidden enemy? Because you overestimated yourself? Or is it something more?



Since your pilgrimage to the Ancient One's temple, you have been aware of a Presence-*his* presence; of that you are certain-on the periphery of your consciousness, gently guiding your hand.

But in Bangalore, that Presence reached *inside* you; dragged you, kicking and screaming, from Passion's embrace. Left alone, you *would* have failed! It was the Presence, you grudgingly admit, that won the day! And the inevitable thought forms: "Perhaps it's been the Presence, molding my life, my choices..."

"...all these years.

"I've fancied myself a great Master. Could it be I've been an even greater pawn?"

Pondering that, you walk on through *Lincolnshire*. On a nearby hill, a pagan temple once stood; now Dorrington Abbey looms above the town--time-worn and weary, watching your advance through hollow eyes.

Here, where the ghosts of Atlantis and Mu hover beside the ghosts of Druid priests, the ley-lines *intersect*! Here, where the worshippers of a crucified lamb unknowingly maintain the *power* of this sacred spot, the final spell fragment awaits!

Here...

...THE MAZE...

...beckons!



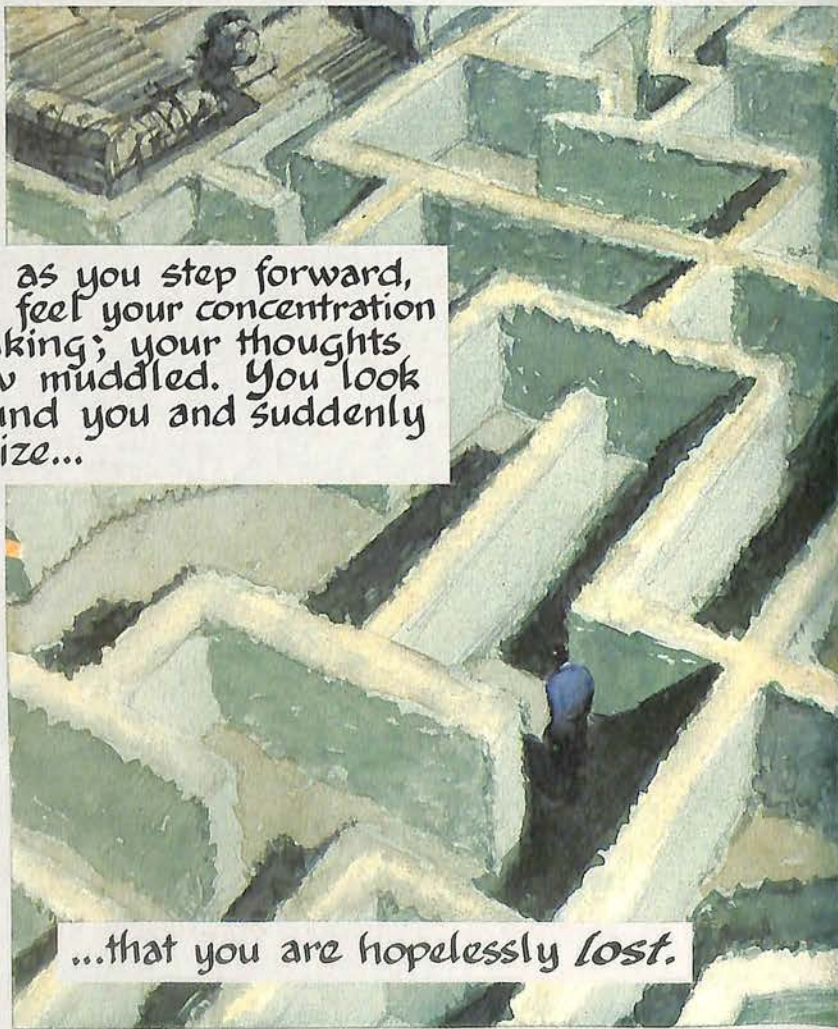
It surrounds the abbey on all sides:
an intricate spiral of hedges, stones,
and trees, leading to the site
of power--the *Omphalos*--
where the final fragment
rests.



You enter cautiously, warily, understanding that the greatest challenge
of all, the greatest *danger*, awaits within.



Yet, as you step forward,
you feel your concentration
breaking; your thoughts
grow muddled. You look
around you and suddenly
realize...



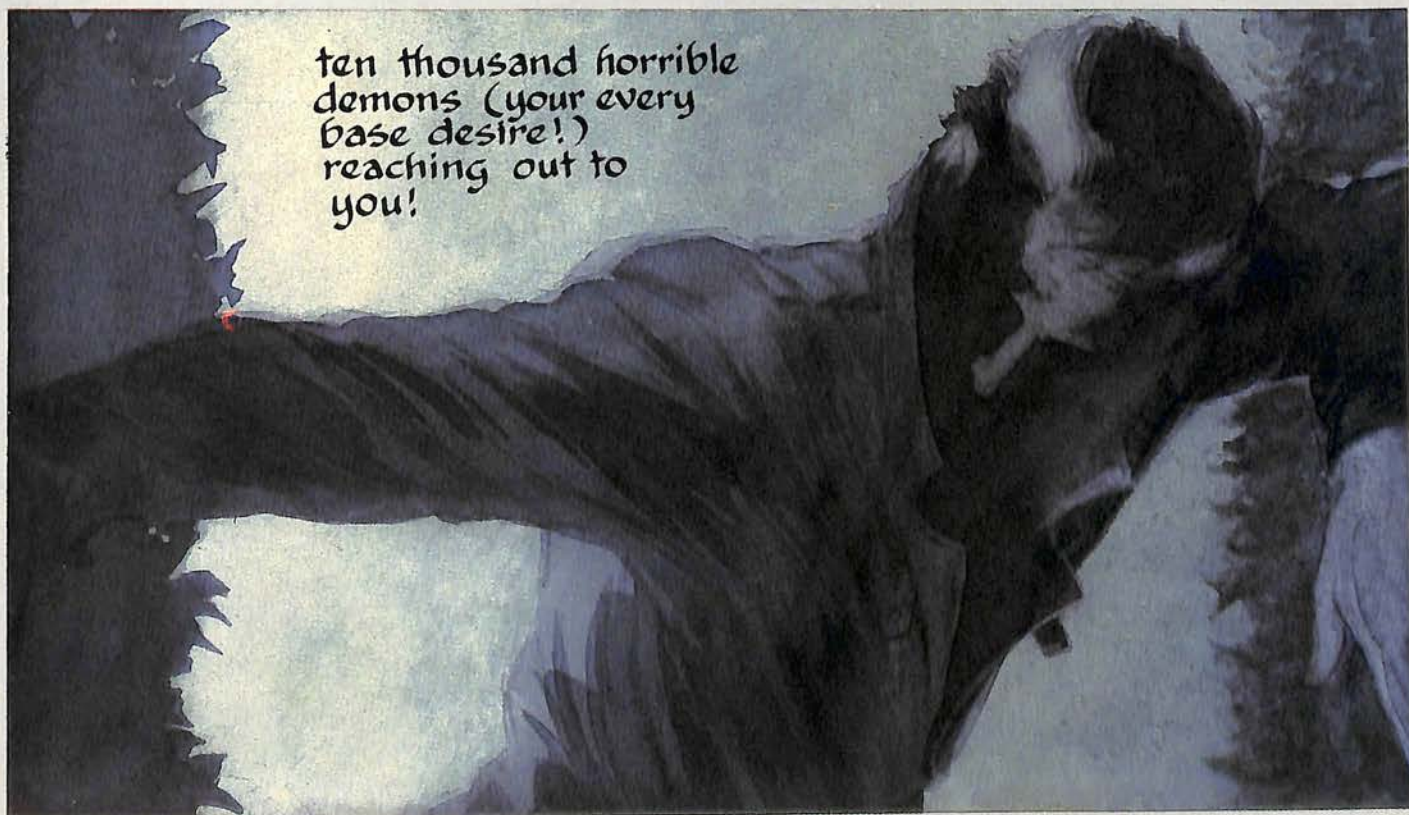
...that you are hopelessly *lost*.

You wander, a sleepwalker; you wander, a fool: each turn, the wrong turn! Each step, the wrong step! And then you spy the glass...



...and the *shadows* deep within it;

ten thousand horrible
demons (your every
base desire!)
reaching out to
you!







The maze is gone: You find yourself standing within the abbey, face-to-face with your long-hidden foe.

You gaze upon her, unsurprised-- "Why didn't I see it before?" you wonder--and speak her name:

"Maya"

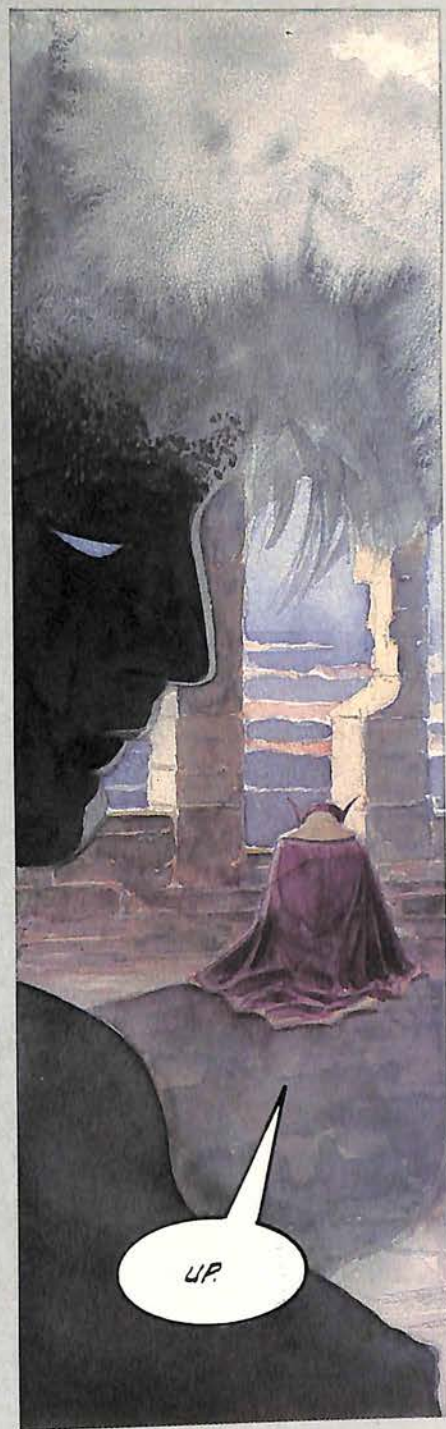
"Of course," she coos, in a voice equal parts Nightmare and Fancy.
"Who else could cripple you with your psyche's darkest shadows
but the Queen of Shades--the embodiment of Illusion?"

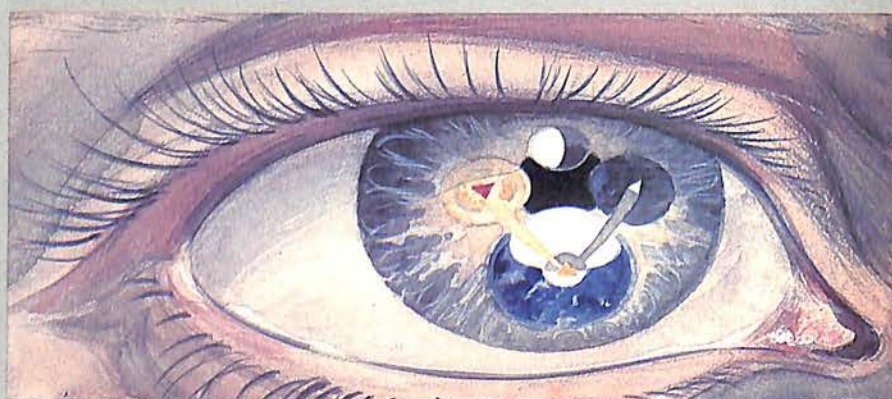
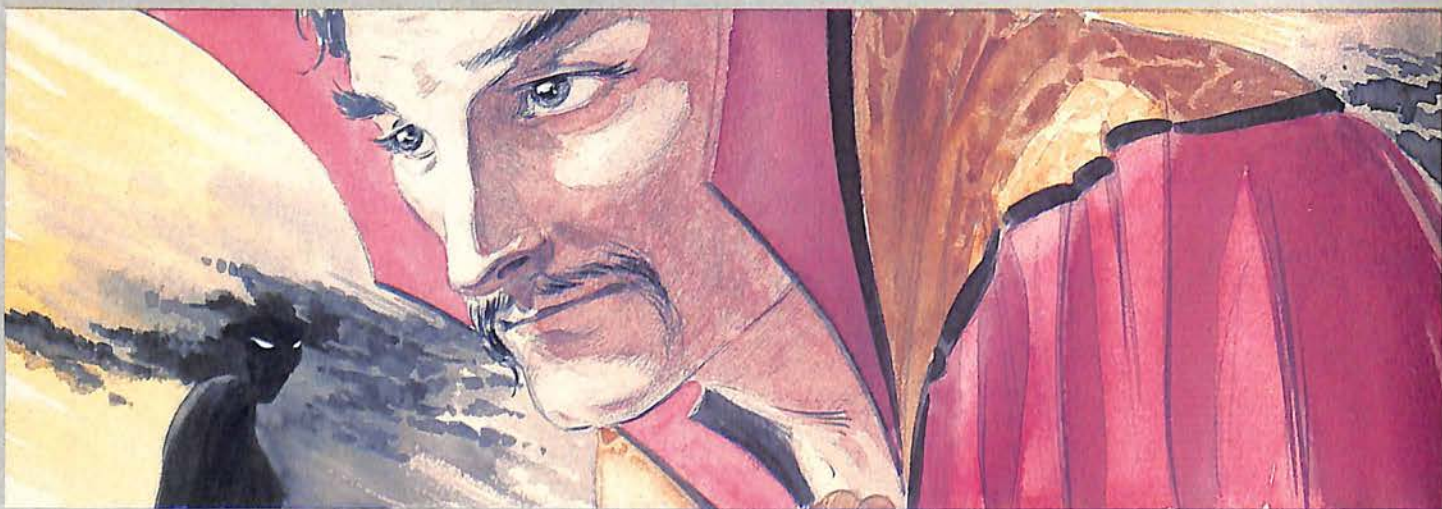
"Who else would so adamantly oppose your progress but she who
knows that the New Man the Shamballese Lords seek to create will
see only Reality--and have no need of me?"

"Think, Doctor Strange," she continues, lifting you up with surprising
delicacy, in her velvet hand; "if you complete the spell, all your
struggles and triumphs--all the achievements of Mankind--will be
swept away."

"It is easy enough for the Lords of Shamballa to predict a
Golden Age and the coming of a new and perfect race. But you
and I know that, when this new race arises, everything we
hold dear...every precious memory...every awful fear...all that
is blessed imperfect Humanity--

--will fall into Oblivion."

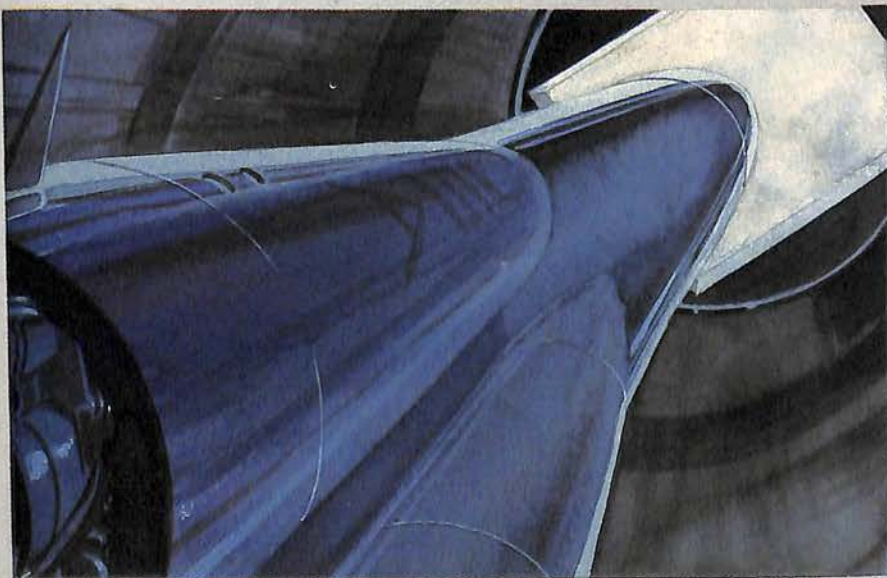






he ley
lines flow.

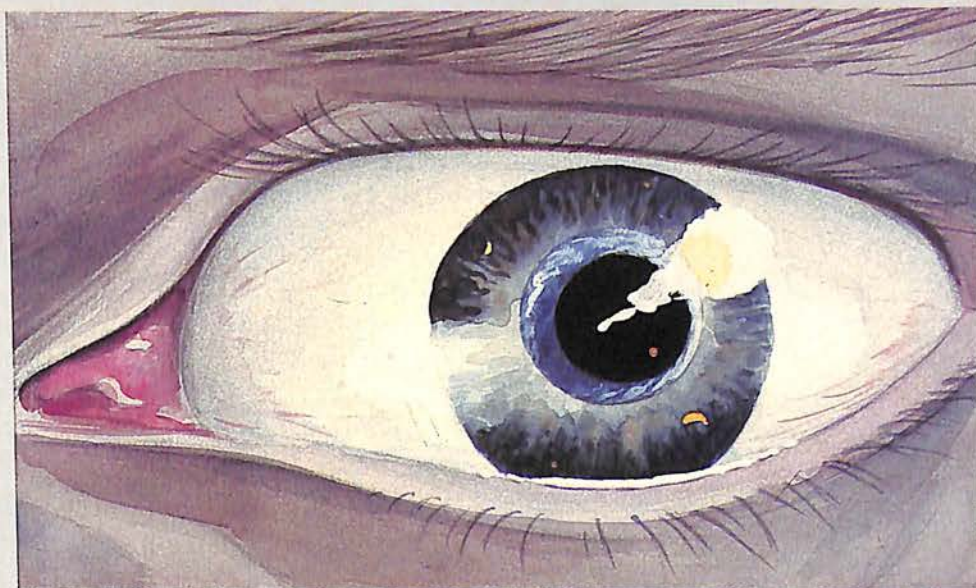
The power spots
merge.





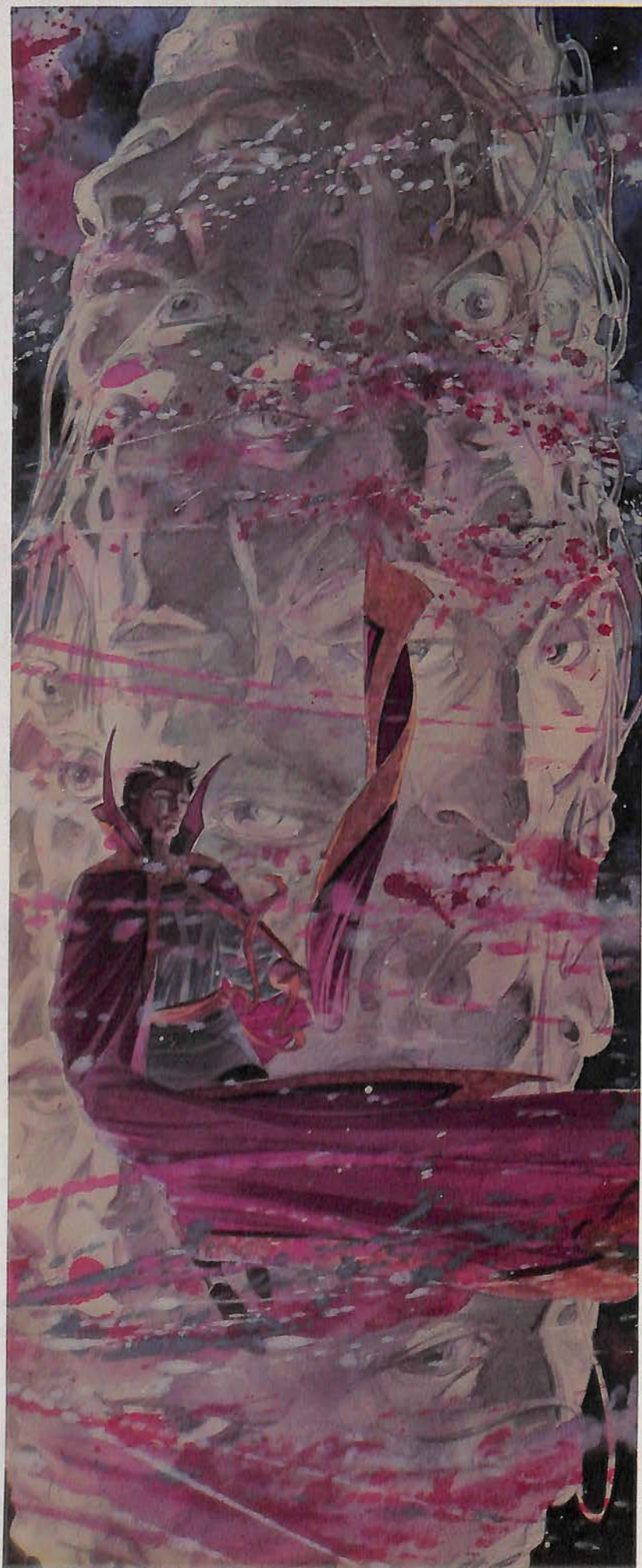
The spell...





...is done.





Shamballa:

You drift, cold and indifferent,
across a static landscape.
Before you: a column, a tower!,
more *confusion* than
consciousness.

Shamballa:

Where history is dictated;
human events molded. Where
the self-proclaimed Lords of
Creation babble incoherently.
Where Stephen Strange...

...speaks;

"In my moment of surrender,
all that I am...*dropped*
away... and I saw--*No! Was*
shown!--the truth you couldn't
see; the truth even Maya was
blind to: I saw that your
ultimate cataclysm will take
place, not without...

...but within.

"The purge you foretold will
occur in every heart. The
fires you foresaw will burn
in every soul. The *Golden*
Age you predicted will come
to each man in his own
time.

"And Maya won't perish! No!
Our illusions will be the very
means...

"...of our purification."

Shamballa:

They listen but do not hear.
"*We have failed!*" cry the
wordless words.
"*We are flawed!*" echo the
soundless sounds.
"*There are Masters...*" Scents.
"*...far greater...*" Textures.
"*...than we are!*"

This simple concept is too much for them to bear, Stephen! Shamballa erupts; *dissolves!* The Lords collapse in upon themselves; *devolve:* god to man to stone to gas to...



...nothing.



"My Master was never here," you finally admit. "The Presence was within me, not them!" But now the Presence is gone, all your eloquence and understanding vanishing with it. Your thoughts are drained; your soul has been bled.

You are empty.

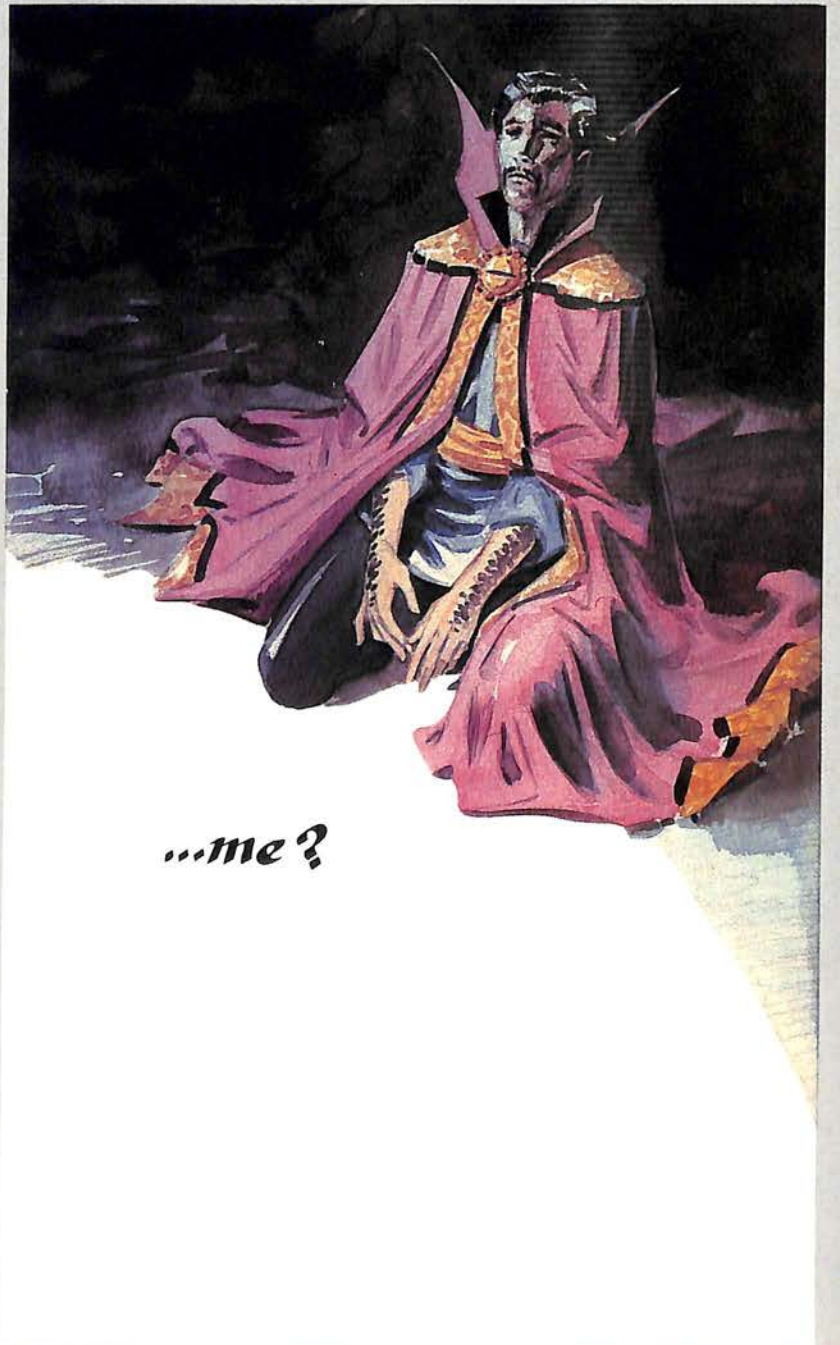
Yet you have come to the
Himalayas...to this ageless
temple where your journey
began. *Why?*



To find the *source* of the
Presence that has guided
and vexed you?

To find answers to
questions you cannot
even articulate?

To find...



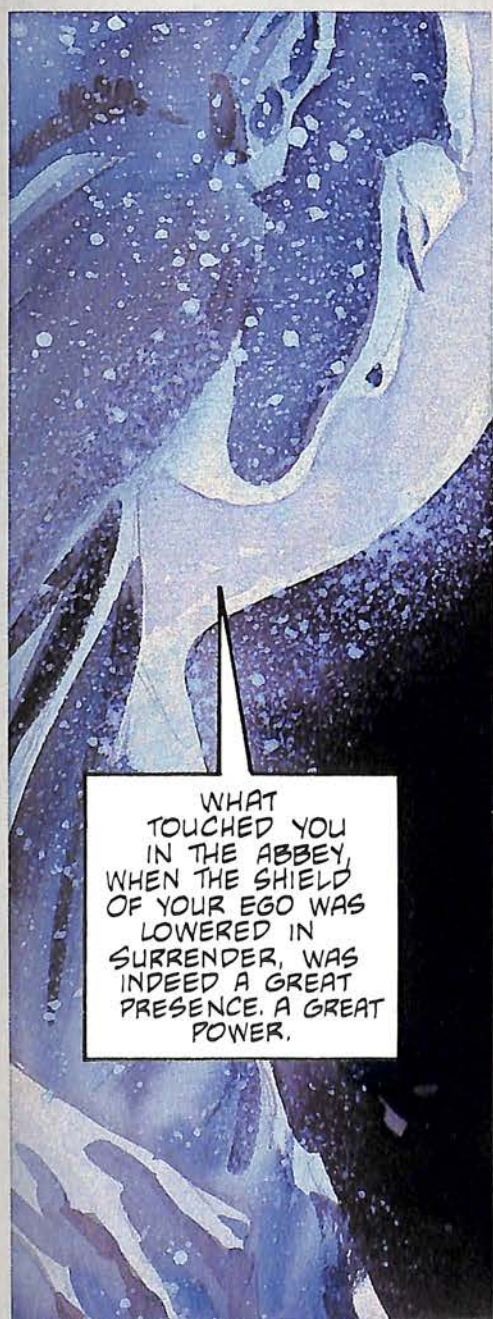
...me?



APPROACH
ME. YOU HAVE
NOTHING TO
FEAR.

MASTER?

YOU
ARE MISTAKEN,
STEPHEN--
ABOUT MANY
THINGS.



WHAT
TOUCHED YOU
IN THE ABBEY,
WHEN THE SHIELD
OF YOUR EGO WAS
LOWERED IN
SURRENDER, WAS
INDEED A GREAT
PRESENCE. A GREAT
POWER.



BUT
IT WAS NOT
THE MASTER...
FOR HE HAS
LONG SINCE
PASSED INTO
THE ONE.



NOT
THE MASTER?
THEN,
WHO--?



"YOU WERE NOT THE ANCIENT ONE'S ONLY HEIR, STEPHEN. WHILE YOU FOLLOWED THE OUTER PATH OF SORCERY AND POWER, I FOLLOWED THE INNER PATH OF SERVICE AND SELF-EFFACEMENT."

"IN DEATH, THE MASTER BEQUEATHED YOU HIS MAGIC-BEQUEATHED ME--"

"--HIS SPIRIT."

"YOU MANIPULATED ME! FROM THE MOMENT YOU GAVE ME THAT MIRROR, YOU PLAYED ME FOR A FOOL! IT WAS ALL A GAME TO YOU!"

"ALL CREATION IS A GAME, STEPHEN. A GAME OF GREAT VALUE...IF PLAYED PROPERLY."

"YOU USED ME!"

"NO. YOU USED YOURSELF. FOR THAT IS WHAT YOU TOUCHED IN THE CATHEDRAL, STEPHEN. YOU TOUCHED... YOUR TRUE SELF."

"RIDDLES!"



VOID. FORM. TIME. EGO.
ILLUSION,
AND *BEHIND* IT ALL... *BEYOND*
IT ALL... *WITHIN* IT ALL--

A POWER. A LIGHT. A...

...PRESENCE!

STEPHEN STRANGE (MELTS AWAY)!
HAMIR (MELTS AWAY)!
EVERYTHING I SEE! EVERYWHERE I LOOK!
EVERY SOUL ENTWINED!
EVERY SOUL--

AM I!

O! CALL ME PARENT!
CHILD! MASTER! DISCIPLE!
MAYA! REALITY!
I AM THE PLANNER AND THE PLAN!
CREATION AND...

CREATOR!

...O...

...I...

...AM...

... ..

BUT
LINKED.

WE'RE...
SEPARATE
AGAIN.

MY
REVELATION...
IT'S MERCURY...
SLIPPING
AWAY.

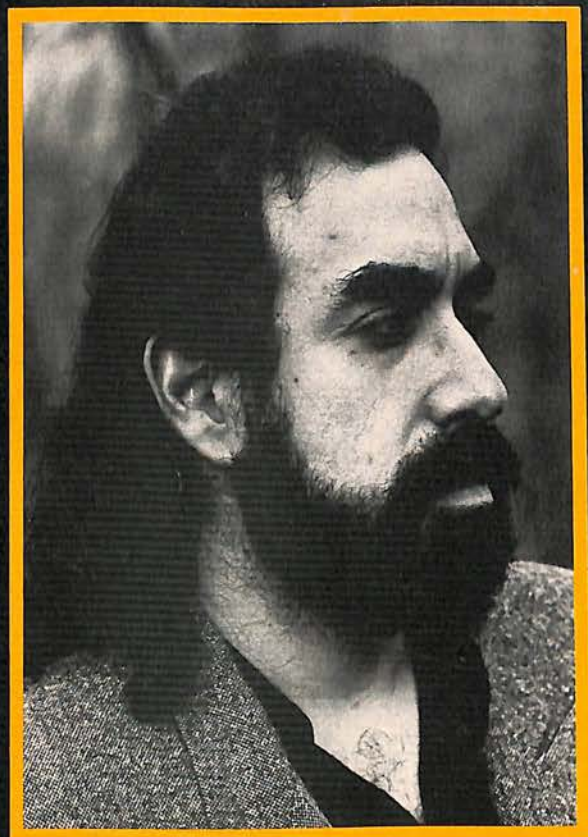
BUT YOU
WILL ALWAYS
REMEMBER.

AT
LEAST--
I'LL *TRY*
TO.

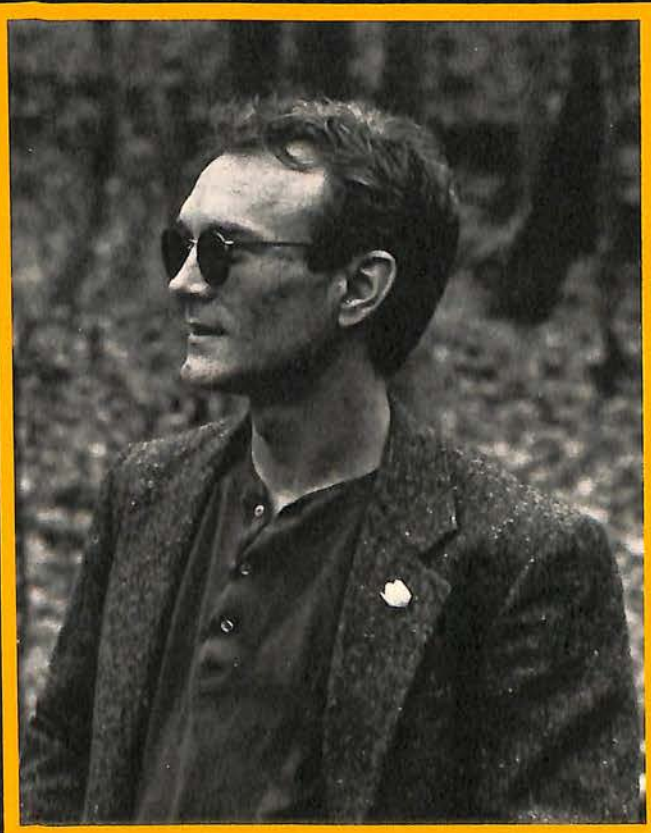


Remember: The Golden
Age *is now!*
Remember: We are all,
each and every one of
us, the Lords of...





J.M. DE MATTEIS is the writer/creator of Epic Comics' critically-acclaimed *MOONSHADOW* series. Upcoming projects include *BLOOD: a tale* — a four-issue limited series — and *FAREWELL, MOONSHADOW* — a graphic novel — both to be published by Epic/Marvel in 1987. De Matteis lives in upstate New York with his wife, Maxine, and his son, Cody.



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