

Glenn Herdling
DR. STRANGE & KILLIAN Character analysis
March 18, 1993

KILLIAN KELL is Earth's new Sorcerer Supreme. He is exactly what the Vishanti and the other extradimensional entities wanted from Strange—a man who is willing to submit to total obedience of his gods. For him, unlike Dr. Strange, the ends justify the means. He already acts as the "house" for several Celtic gods—TARANIS (granting him power over the weather), CERUNNOS (granting him mastery over his physical abilities), and the MORRIGAN (granting him necromantic powers and the ability to control animals). If Killian opens himself to Dr. Strange's gods, he will be very powerful indeed. Whereas Doc had to invoke these gods, Killian is a living receptacle for them—thus embodying all their abilities.

Killian is young and inexperienced (he is only 18 years old, whereas Dr. Strange is in his mid-forties at least). Thus, Killian can be easily molded by the extradimensional gods. The gods will train him themselves, allowing no room for human "flaws" like free will that was so important in Strange's training under the Ancient One. The gods can't understand that it is this trait which makes us truly human. Killian and the gods will learn what happens when that freedom is removed, and it will tip the scales against them in the WAR OF THE SEVEN SPHERES down the road—enough so that Dr. Strange will have to come to the rescue. But Killian doesn't mind losing his free will if it means the gods will grant him more power to smite evil. Killian is a young, headstrong Punisher-type of mystic—the complete opposite of Dr. Strange. Killian was brought up on the streets, while Strange was comfortable most of his life. Killian's sister was killed in front of him and he blames the world (externalizes). Doc's sister died in front of him and he blames himself (internalizes).

When Killian uses the powers of his gods, he must exact a price to ensure his total submission. For instance, whenever he used his Celtic abilities, WELTS appeared on his body. Now, when he uses EYE OF AGAMOTTO it will contain "optic nerves" which burrow painfully into his forehead and attach to his pineal gland.

In the early issues of this storyline, I will focus on Killian's new role as the Sorcerer Supreme's apprentice. But he is like no other apprentice Strange has ever encountered—he is headstrong and independent. And Killian's own respect for Strange dwindles because Strange no longer calls upon godly help while that is the only source of Killian's power. In DOCTOR STRANGE #57, Strange and Killian will travel to Ireland with the Black Knight to battle the Blood Wraith. There, Killian will encounter the Celtic gods once more to cement his relationship with them.

While Strange battles the Black Knight in issue #58, Killian will go about making his plans to usurp Doc's title from him. He becomes obsessed with reading Strange's ancient tomes. He starts to dabble in conjuring extradimensional entities, and he makes a sinister deal with Strange's former protectors to become the new Sorcerer Supreme.

Let me assert here that Killian will never be portrayed as evil, just misguided. He is so obsessed with ridding the world of evil, he will go to any extent to do so—even selling his soul to the Vishanti, et. al. I actually want people to empathize with this character, so that when this story line reaches its conclusion, we will still have a viable character to play with (maybe we'll call him Necromancer?).

DOCTOR STRANGE #59 will continue to explore Killian's mission to take Stephen's mantle from him. He even secures the house for himself, which may lead to the Sanctum becoming a portal that unleashes Lilith's demons in issue #60. Doc will feel responsible for allowing these demons to escape and will battle them as Killian forms another bond—between himself and Hellstorm. He will make Hellstorm see why he should be set up as the new Sorcerer Supreme. For his own purposes, Hellstorm agrees to help Killian and both will defeat Doc in issue #61. As the coup de grace, Hellstorm will bond the magical essence of Dr. Strange (the rune above his Sanctum) to Strange's soul, burning a permanent tattoo upon his chest, much like Hellstorm's own Darksoul—a mark of slavery. The battle will conclude with the extradimensionals creating a temporal displacement spell which adjusts the memories of EVERYONE on the planet to believe that Killian Kell has been the Sorcerer Supreme for the last decade rather than Dr. Strange. In fact, almost all those who have dealt with Dr. Strange as the Sorcerer Supreme will forget him. THIS WILL CAUSE A MAJOR CHANGE WITHIN THE MARVEL UNIVERSE AND REALLY BOOST READER INTEREST, DRAWING SOME MUCH-DESERVED ATTENTION TO THIS TITLE!

The spell will transport Dr. Strange to an asylum, where he will wake up to discover he has no hands (perhaps he lost them in battle with Killian and Hellstorm?). At the asylum, doctors and nurses (one who looks suspiciously like Clea) will try to convince "Dr. Sanders" that he lost his hands over ten years ago in a car accident. The scar on his chest was caused by the steering wheel. He couldn't handle the news, and he withdrew into a state of catatonia, where he has been living in a fantasy world ever since. Of course, Doc believes this is some ploy by one of his enemies, but when he realizes he can no longer access his magical abilities (another side-effect of the spell), it only serves to convince the doctors that he is still not mentally well.

When Doc finally escapes the asylum, he goes to confront Killian (who has magically aged 10 years) at the much-changed Sanctum Sanctorum. Even Wong doesn't recognize his former mentor. Killian will retell his origin as he sees it now, and it will be similar to Strange's own on some points and different on others. When Doc sees his former super hero colleagues rallying around Killian (maybe we can tie into the SECRET DEFENDERS here) he begins to doubt his own sanity. In a distorted reflection of his origin, Strange wanders around as a derelict, until he makes his pilgrimage to Tibet (which will be much harder with prosthetic hands). When he gets to the place where the Ancient One used to dwell, he finds nothing. We'll close that issue with a far-shot of a handless Dr. Strange falling to his knees in the snow.

To really put it to the fans, we won't bring Dr. Strange back for several issues (although, I would like to do a story where Strange's hands and Cloak of Levitation come together and fight evil as they search for their owner). Instead, we will focus on Killian's adventures as the Sorcerer Supreme—his similarities and differences to Dr. Strange. Remember, the spell has affected him as well, and he truly believes all of Dr. Strange's experiences to be his own. Of course, there will be some minor alterations in certain events (such as Clea, who has been brought into our dimension and her mind restructured due to her soul-link with Stephen Strange. I also have a story in mind where Dormammu has bonded his essence to Clea to enter Earth's dimension, but that's down the road a while.). But I don't want to bog down this title with mindless flashbacks, so if a character had an adventure with Dr. Strange and there is an inconsistency if that character now believes he shared that adventure with Killian, it will be explained in one sentence.

As Killian continues his duties as Sorcerer Supreme (in a more violent fashion, especially since the death of his sister, which Killian now believes was caused by mystical means), Stephen Strange will re-emerge. When he is at his lowest, his hands & Cloak find him. Combining his skills as a neurosurgeon and a sorcerer, Strange reattaches his hands to his arms. He has partially overcome the block on his magical powers. Now he knows that he's not insane (or maybe completely over the edge!) but his task will be to convince everyone else in the world as he rebuilds himself as a Master of Mystic Arts one step at a time. He will obtain a new costume which will still consist of his Cloak of Levitation (which I will ask the artist to portray harshly angular, like McFarlane's Spawn, as though it is alive—it is!). Let's get rid of the tunic so the rune on Strange's chest is exposed. Since Strange is now operating as a rogue sorcerer, he will keep his secret identity as Stephen Sanders—so maybe he should once again don the black face he had in DOCTOR STRANGE #177-183 to give him a sinister look.

Strange's first goal will be to set up a base of operations, so he obtains a staff position at the Sara Wolfe Metaphysical Institute as a paranormal investigator. This institute is located on the grounds of Miscatonic University, a college which is situated on a ley line nexus point, attracting many supernatural entities. (Miscatonic University is actually a school that I've borrowed from the works of occultist H.P. Lovecraft. Hey, D.C. borrowed Arkham Asylum from him, so why not?) Strange's first goal is to convince Sara Wolfe of his identity. So won't he be in for a surprise when he discovers that Sara is engaged to Karl Mordo—a sorcerer that Killian nearly destroyed and whom Sara has taken pity on.

As Strange works his way up, gaining strength and supporters, Killian continues his adventures as the Sorcerer Supreme. Strange and Killian will engage in conflicts that are at times very diverse, and at other times very similar. For example, when Marie Leveau enlists Killian to help her battle Calypso and the Living Zombie, Doc will be taking on the wizard Kabbala and his lifeless Golem. To tease the fans, we will have the two sorcerers almost confront each other several times, but they will always just miss each other.

This storyline has the potential to run a very long time, but when it is finally resolved, Strange will once again assume the mantle of Sorcerer Supreme, but as a very different character. I will **not** have Strange return to his "Hoary Hosts of Hoggoth" harangue. Killian, upon learning that his entire existence as he knows it has been a hoax, will still join the Vishanti in their War of the Seven Spheres. In fact, this war can be a major storyline, running across many Marvel titles, but ultimately resolving the tale of two Sorcerer Supremes.

I realize that some of these ideas are drastic measures, and we are playing around with Doc's status quo, but obviously *something* must be done to boost reader interest in this title. I know the idea slightly mirrors concepts in titles like CAPTAIN AMERICA and THOR, but it worked on those! By dividing the action of the comic between two characters, we can appeal to those who like the super heroic side of Dr. Strange and to those who enjoy the Sandman approach.

Thanks for considering this proposal!