

PALERMO, SICILY

MOST PEOPLE ON THIS LITTLE BLUE ORB GO THROUGH LIFE THINKING THE WORST THINGS THAT CAN HAPPEN ARE WHAT THEY SEE ON THE 6 O'CLOCK NEWS EACH NIGHT.

AND THAT'S A GOOD THING.

KNOWING THAT THERE ARE OTHER TERRORS LURKING IN THE DARK OF NIGHT--TERRORS AS OLD AS MAN HIMSELF--WOULD MAKE LIFE UNLIVABLE FOR THEM.

LUCKILY, THEY ARE NOT WITHOUT PROTECTORS.



FOR A LONG TIME, THOSE PROTECTORS WERE ABLE TO KEEP THE THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT AT BAY.

BUT NOW WAR HAS BROKEN OUT--AND AS OF FOUR MONTHS AGO IN SICILY, THE GOOD GUYS ARE LOSING.



THAT'S WHEN THE RED COURT
UNLEASHED THEIR BIGGEST,
MOST AUDACIOUS ATTACK YET
ON THE WHITE COUNCIL.

THINK PEARL
HARBOR.

EXCEPT INSTEAD
OF FLYING MACHINES
PROVIDING THE CARNAGE,
IT WAS A LEGION OF
BLOODTHIRSTY
VAMPIRES.



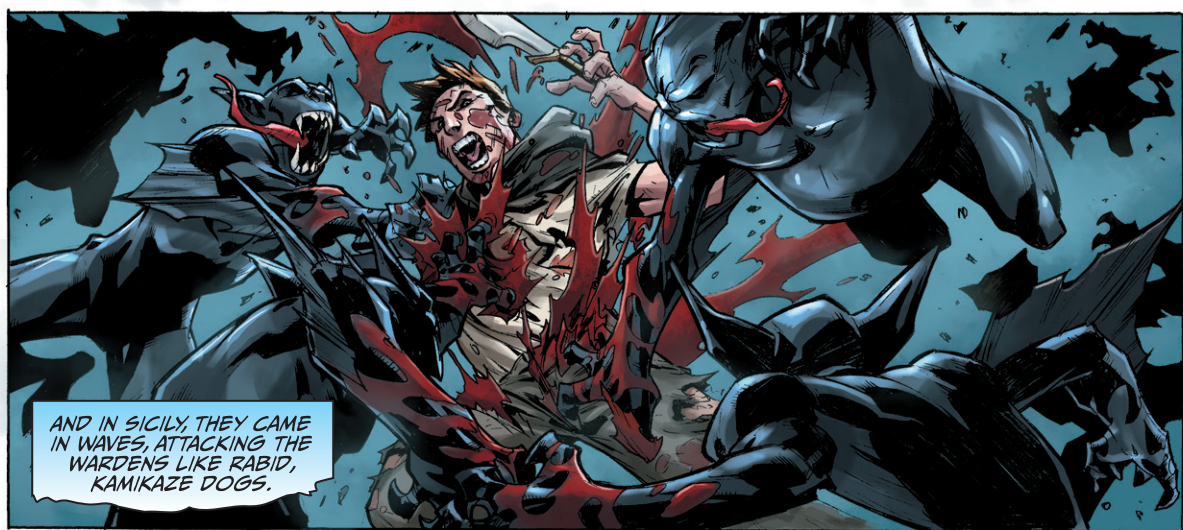


THE WARDENS OF THE WHITE COUNCIL ARE DAMNED POWERFUL WIZARDS. INCORRUPTIBLE. THE BEST OF THE BEST.

SOME OF THEM HAVE BEEN ON THE JOB FOR NIGH ON A CENTURY, AND EACH WOULD GLADLY LAY DOWN THEIR LIVES TO PROTECT THE INNOCENT.



BUT WHEN YOU'RE FACING AN ENEMY THAT CAN REPLENISH ITS RANKS EASILY AND DOESN'T UNDERSTAND THE CONCEPT OF COLLATERAL DAMAGE, YOU'RE AT A FUNDAMENTAL DISADVANTAGE.



AND IN SICILY, THEY CAME IN WAVES, ATTACKING THE WARDENS LIKE RABID, KAMIKAZE DOGS.

HAVING SUFFERED SIGNIFICANT CASUALTIES, CAPTAIN LUCCIO AND A FEW OTHERS HELD A REAR GUARD POSITION WHILE THE WOUNDED WERE EVACUATED THROUGH A PORTAL TO THE NEVEREVER.

THEY KNEW THE VAMPIRES WOULD THROW EVERYTHING THEY HAD AT THEM TO PREVENT ESCAPE...



...WHAT THEY COULDN'T KNOW IS THAT THE BLOODSUCKERS WOULD SUMMON OUTSIDERS TO AUGMENT THEIR FORCES.



OUTSIDERS ARE THE FOOT SOLDIERS OF THE OLD ONES, GODS WHO'D RULED THE MORTAL WORLD IN THE TIME BEFORE MEN.

THEY COME FROM A REALM BEYOND THE NATURAL WORLD, OUTSIDE EVEN THE NEVERNEVER—AND SUMMONING THEM VIOLATES ONE OF THE SEVEN LAWS OF MAGIC:

THOU SHALT NOT OPEN THE OUTER GATES.



WITHIN THE FIRST FEW MOMENTS OF THE OUTSIDERS' ATTACK, THE COUNCIL LOST ANOTHER TWENTY-THREE WARDENS.

IT WAS AN ABSOLUTE MASSACRE, BUT IT WAS ABOUT TO GET MUCH WORSE.