

# rewriting MULTIVERSE OF MADNESS notes

**(DISCLAIMER: THIS DOC IS AN INCOMPLETE WORK-IN-PROGRESS SO THERE ARE SOME MISSING GAPS OF INFORMATION WITH THE REWRITE'S STORY.)**

- **My Diagnosis:** This film suffered from trying to do two different things at once, it was trying to be two different movies in two different genres at the same time. Like another superhero crossover film – *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* – a film that I previously rewrote on this channel, (the link is in the description down below if you're interested) *Multiverse of Madness* was trying to be a sequel for a superhero standalone film and a crossover film that was supposed to build up to some ambitious expanding in the franchise's worldbuilding. *Multiverse of Madness* couldn't make up its mind if it wanted to be a *Doctor Strange* sequel or a crossover film that set up a multiverse saga. Personally, I don't know what the point of *Multiverse of Madness* was supposed to be. Was it supposed to follow up on *Doctor Strange's* origin movie? I doubt it. Marvel Studio had much higher ambitions and was aiming at a much bigger target. They wanted to make an epic multiverse movie that would allow them to follow up with multiple multiverse-centered sequels, giving them nearly unlimited potential for future sequels in Phases 4, 5 and 6 of the MCU. But by trying to be **both** a Multiverse crossover and a *Doctor Strange* sequel, *Multiverse of Madness* was neither of those. It was trying to do too much at once and in the end, it ended up doing nothing at all. Honestly, the movie just needed to be simplified. It needed to tell one story, not several. Which is strangely ironic considering the multiplying nature of the Multiverse itself influencing the multiplying nature of the film's script and its direction. But alas, *Multiverse of Madness* would've turned out just as messy regardless of which filmmaker was at the helm, Scott Derrickson, Sam Raimi or otherwise. Because *Multiverse of Madness* was 100% a studio movie. The film was not a product of an artist's vision, but a marketing strategy from a boardroom of executives. You know the saying, "art is not made by committee"? Well, *Multiverse of Madness* was made by committee. Therefore, it never got the chance to be art. That is why Sam Raimi requested that the title card, "A Sam Raimi film" be removed from *Multiverse of Madness's* end credits. Because it wasn't his film. It was the studio's, and it would've turned out the same regardless if he had been there or not. The original director Scott Derrickson quit working on *Multiverse of Madness* because of the headaches and frustration he was dealing with in regards to "creative differences" he had with the studio. It was reported that Fiege became just as meddlesome as Ike Perlmutter in that he kept on compromising Derrickson's vision for the film with studio interference. Which is a shame considering how Kevin Fiege used to be the champion of the source material and was praised for being such a collaborative and protective project leader during the years it took to create the *Infinity Saga*. But after *Avengers: Endgame*, there was a considerable change in Fiege's leadership style. Whether this is due to a rising ego or to studio pressure, this change in Fiege definitely came about as a result of *Endgame's* record-breaking world success at the box office. Not to mention, *Multiverse*

of *Madness* along with the entirety of Phase 4, was really hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, forcing a lot of their films to be postponed and ultimately rearranged in the order of release, thereby changing the original chronology and timeline of Phase 4's overarching story. Aside from the chaos that came with the pandemic, there was also a significant lack of communication going on behind-the-scenes of Phase 4, as Elizabeth Olsen confirmed that the screenwriter of *Multiverse of Madness*, Michael Waldron, hadn't seen *WandaVision* because the show was still in post-production and had yet to be released while the script was being written for *Multiverse of Madness*. Which is why Wanda's character arc from *WandaVision* ultimately got repeated in *Multiverse of Madness*. Granted, that's not a valid excuse, because a simple conversation between Waldron and the head of Marvel Studio's writing department would've easily cleared that up. Or even from one of the executive producers like Kevin Fiege, Victoria Alonso or Louis D'Esposito. I find it hard to believe that *none* of the higher ups at Marvel were keeping track of the overall story. Simple communication between departments could've avoided that whole debacle and confusion with *Multiverse of Madness*, rather than leave that responsibility to an actor like Elizabeth Olsen as she tried to fill in the gaps and explain what was going on with her character in *WandaVision* to Michael Waldron. As much as I love Elizabeth Olsen for it, it ultimately was not her job to keep Michael Waldron in the loop. It is never an actor's job to keep the writer up to date. It is the directors and producers' jobs. There is where the MCU Story Group we proposed in our Phase 4 Rewrite document would have come in handy.

- **My Treatment:** So, like my rewrite for *Batman v Superman*, I am going to simplify *Multiverse of Madness* by choosing it to be just one kind of movie and sticking with that premise. I personally don't see the point of *Doctor Strange 2* being a crossover film because a crossover film about the Multiverse seems more appropriate for an ensemble film like an *Avengers* movie or some other kind of superhero team up film like *Fantastic Four*, *Midnight Sons* or something along those lines. I know it sounds dumb saying it out loud, but *Doctor Strange 2* would make a lot more sense as a sequel to 2016's *Doctor Strange*, following up on the conflict between the Sorcerer Supreme and Baron Mordo that was set up at the end of *Doctor Strange 1*. I'm not saying that Scarlet Witch can't be in *Doctor Strange 2* but making her and the Multiverse the center of *Doctor Strange*'s conflict felt like a hard detour from the story Marvel was previously telling with this character. Baron Mordo's hunt for all sorcerers became an abandoned plotline, which is a shame considering the potential such an intriguing conflict can bring to the table. Now granted, does that mean Dr. Strange and Scarlet Witch shouldn't be responsible for a universal crisis within a Multiverse crossover film? No. Actually, I think such a plot point would work really well. Just not in *Doctor Strange 2*. It needs to happen in an *Avengers* movie or some other kind of crossover. Let the crossovers be crossovers and the solo films be solo films. Don't try bleeding the two together because that's when you lose focus, and the direction of the film becomes messy and scattered. Because what did *Multiverse of Madness* achieve? Did it expand the MCU in a meaningful way? Did it introduce any of the recently recovered Marvel IPs and streamline them into the MCU? No. It didn't do any of that. So, what was the point of the Multiverse? Personally, I think the only reason a Multiverse movie should exist right now in the MCU is to introduce characters and

teams previously owned by different studios into the MCU, like Deadpool, the X-Men and the Fantastic Four. That's what I would use a Multiverse movie for. Not to backtrack all of Wanda's character growth that she experienced in *WandaVision* and have her revisit the same character arc she already conquered. For those of you who have been following my channel for a while now, you know that I like to approach my rewrites by making them as realistic as possible. Meaning, I stick to the same rules and guidelines that the original writers and creators had to follow, so this hypothetical version of the film that I come up with, could have plausibly existed in the real world. Now granted, I just mentioned that because *Multiverse of Madness* was 100% a studio movie, that means that realistically no other version of this film could have ever existed because the studio just wouldn't have allowed it. So, in the end, *any* rewrite of this film would by default be considered unrealistic. But I'm going to do my best to imagine that Fiege and the rest of the execs would've been open to working with some changes and were willing to compromise and negotiate on a few key story elements.

- **Inspiration & Influences:** These comics listed below featured crossovers between Dr. Strange and Scarlet Witch and helped influence *Multiverse of Madness*. These include *Doctor Strange Vol. 2 #60 "Assault on Avengers Mansion"*, where it is revealed that if Scarlet Witch were to come in possession of a book on dark magic known as the Darkhold, she would become a host for the demon Chthon. Once Chthon possesses Wanda, he would make good his return to the realm of the living, thereby making Scarlet Witch a walking plot device for the narrative. In the second source of inspiration, *Dr. Strange, Sorcerer Supreme #47 "Strange Bedfellows Part II"*, Dr. Strange comes in contact with alternate versions of himself from different universes, one of them being a corrupted and evil version of himself. But in *Doctor Strange Vol. 4 #8 "The Last Days of Magic Chapter Three"*, that is where the most influences in *Multiverse of Madness* are noticeable. This is the story where Dr. Strange and Wanda really have the most interactions as she becomes a fully-committed member of a team of sorcerers assembled by Strange to combat a magical threat, with a lot of focus being placed on Strange and Wanda's relationship. Shuma-Gorath (Gargantos) and an orphan child who can travel across the Multiverse are both featured in this comic. I want to pull inspiration from the comic *Empyre: X-Men #4 "Un-Ring"*, because this comic really emphasizes Strange's role as a mentor and counselor to Wanda in the aftermath of a catastrophic event. This event being Wanda's possession by Chthon, resulting in Dr. Strange performing an exorcism over her and continuing to help Wanda clean up her magical messes that are created from her mistakes. Especially considering in both the original version of the film and in my rewrite, I want Strange to help guide Scarlet Witch on how to fix her own self-created problems.
- **Villains:** So, for this rewrite, I'm going to keep mostly everything about the Darkhold the same, except I'm going to commit to making Chthon – the Demon of the Darkhold – an actual character in this version of the story, with Wanda having been enlisted to help bring about the return of Chthon to Earth. Baron Mordo – who is a supporting antagonist – will be forced to form a temporary alliance with the sorcerers when their world is mutually threatened by the demon Chthon, essentially making Mordo an anti-villain and having him fulfill that archetype to the fullest.

- **The Scarlet Witch's Role:** Wong: "What the Hulk was for Banner, the Scarlet Witch is for Wanda". After the events of *WandaVision*, Dr. Strange went out to search for Wanda when he heard the news of what happened at Westview, hoping to offer his assistance to Wanda, from one sorcerer to another. He found her alone in a cabin out in the woods, totally obsessed with the Darkhold. After a brief scuffle, Strange was able to separate Wanda's connection with the Darkhold and bring her back to Kamar Taj for rehabilitation. Maybe it takes a group of sorcerers to perform the exorcism on Wanda and purge her soul of the Darkhold's influence? Perhaps we could even spice this scene up by having Mordo find Wanda first, and they have an insane fight as despite Mordo's cleverness, he is put on defense by the Scarlet Witch's raw power and viciousness. Strange could show up in the middle of the fight and help Mordo defeat the Scarlet Witch. Once she is down, Mordo prepares to take down Strange, but anticipating this, he lays some kind of magical trap for Mordo that he totally falls for and is captured. Thereby allowing Strange to return to Kamar Taj with both Wanda and Mordo.
- **Rintrah's Role:** As Dr. Strange's new apprentice, Rintrah can replace America Chavez as the new recruit who fulfills the Naïve Newcomer archetype and becomes the audience surrogate for all of the new elements to the magical world that are introduced in this sequel, such as Chthon, the Darkhold, etc. Which would be unfamiliar to the audience, but something magical characters like Strange, Wong, and Scarlet Witch are all fully aware of. Thereby Rintrah helps the audience get caught up to speed just by being a newcomer to Kamar Taj.
- **Five-Man Band??:** The main group of sorcerers in this film can perhaps fulfill the Five-Man Band team archetype. Wong – as the Sorcerer Supreme – is the Leader, Strange is the Lancer who, as former Sorcerer Supreme, is always questioning Wong's orders and defying his decisions (since he's still a little offended at having lost the position due to a technicality, and it can be the source of some banter between the two), Rintrah is the Big Guy due to his natural minotaur strength, maybe Baron Mordo can be the Smart Guy?? (Honestly, if the Five-Man Band thing doesn't work out, it is not the end of the world. It could even be a Three Plus Two team archetype.). Sara – as the Cheyenne shaman in touch with her spirituality – is the Heart, and Scarlet Witch can fulfill the Sixth Ranger archetype??
- **Chthon's Names:** He Who Holds the Darkness, the Demon of the Darkhold, the Dark Elder, the Sleeper Beneath. (Perhaps one of Chthon's titles "The Dark Majesty" can be reserved for another demonic villain like Mephisto?) Chthon's followers will refer to him as "He Who Holds the Darkness" and "the Sleeper Beneath", but the sorcerers of Kamar Taj refer to him as "the Demon of the Darkhold".
- **Dr. Strange's Character Arc:** Dr. Strange should have had a character arc that revolved around his flaw of always believing that the only way to solve problems is to break the rules. **The Lie** in his arc is that Dr. Strange believes that rules *do* exist for a reason, because the line between chaos and order is a critical boundary. But Dr. Strange believes that *he* is the exception, and that only *he* can break those rules because he is the only one qualified enough to handle such a dangerous task. He believes he is the only one who knows how to break the rules the "right" way. **The Ghost** that supports this Lie is that Dr. Strange has a track of record of successes despite his flagrant disregard for boundaries. His arrogance and cockiness have been

fostered by all his victories, as both a surgeon and a sorcerer. He thinks he is the only one who can break the rules because every time he has done it in the past, everything turned out for the better because of it. **The Want** in Dr. Strange's character arc is that he wants to save Wanda and keep Chthon imprisoned, but **the Need** in Strange's arc that he must overcome is that the rules apply to him just like everyone else. Just because he has gifts and talents, that doesn't give him a free pass to do whatever he wants. He needs to suffer the consequences of his actions and accept accountability for his mistakes. Which is what the film's Controlling Idea/main theme should have been. Instead of the film's moral message being "face your fears", it should have been, "it is not only what we do, but also what we do *not* do, for which we are accountable". This accountability character arc was already perfectly set up in the beginning of the original film by having Dr. Strange's colleague criticize him for his actions during *Infinity War*. It was great set up, but there was no pay off.

- **Scarlet Witch's Character Arc:** Scarlet Witch has the potential to be the MCU's equivalent of Prince Zuko from *Avatar: The Last Airbender*. Where she makes progress in becoming a better person, has a relapse, and now must atone for her mistakes by earning her redemption and reclaiming the trust of her peers the hard way. I don't think Wanda should remain dead. In fact, I think it's the easy way out. Wanda pulled a Kylo Ren and committed a long streak of horrific crimes to humanity, yet only paid a cheap price for all the suffering she caused with a very quick death. That's not an earned redemption. It's a cop out. (Which by the way – I know this is a hot take – but if we're being honest, Darth Vader's "redemption" in Episode 6 was also kind of a cop out too). Wanda needs to put in the sweat, blood, and tears it takes to fix her mistakes. She needs to put in the hard work of redeeming herself because even though the rest of Earth 616 doesn't know what she did...she does. And that's enough to motivate her into changing for the better and making things right. I hope she does return in future sequels for the sole purpose of completing her redemption arc properly. For this rewrite, she's going to start working on her redemption by not only repairing the damages she wrought under Chthon's possession, but also by becoming an instructor at the Strange Academy and dedicating herself to training and educating the next generation of sorcerers. Teaching them and cautioning them to not repeat the same mistakes she did and to be more careful with their powers and emotions.
- **Minions:** Some of the baddies that the sorcerers can face in this film are some Hellish monsters and creatures of the night that Chthon has been known to summon to fight on his behalf in the comics. These can include the Night-guants and the N'Garai, these black-blooded horrors who in terms of this narrative, would be the only enemies capable of giving the sorcerers a run for their money when it comes to a fight. I wouldn't want Chthon's minions to just be mindless waves of Mooks that the heroes plow through, like the Chitauri or the Ultron drones in the *Avengers* films. Instead, I would only want there to be a select handful of these demonic beings that the sorcerers fight at a time, but each of the monsters are tough opponents that require multiple sorcerers or one really super powerful (or clever) sorcerer to take them out. Think of each monster as a mini-boss. Let the monsters not only be strong and fast, but clever as well. They may not speak but they're definitely not mindless idiots, as their intelligent strategies and unpredictability would push the sorcerers into corners during their fights, forcing Strange and his allies to think outside the box when

battling Chthon's demons. To make them even more frightening, we could even have the monsters be incapable of feeling pain, so most attacks wouldn't stop or slow the beasties down since they're immune to any kind of pain or discomfort, simply responding with screams of hatred or growls of laughter whenever a limb is severed, a wing is clipped, an eye is poked out, or a normally fatal wound is dealt to them, but they remain unaffected by it. The N'Garai and Night-guants would need to fulfill the Elite Mooks archetype, rather than just the Mook archetype. Some examples of Elite Mooks include the Uruk-Hai from *the Lord of the Rings*, the Super Battle Droids from the *Star Wars* prequel trilogy, the Immortals from *300*, and the Sardaukar from *Dune*. And the cool thing about this film's baddies being a bunch of fictional CGI monsters that don't resemble human beings whatsoever nor do they have normal-colored blood, is that we get to really take full advantage of pushing that PG-13 rating and allow the sorcerers to dismember and slay these creatures in really creative and brutal ways without having to worry about the film being categorized as Rated R. The Orcs being constantly beheaded and disemboweled in *the Lord of the Rings* trilogy is a perfect example of this, since they don't look human and they have black blood instead of red blood, it allows the filmmakers more creative freedom to play with bloodier action scenes while also dodging the looming threat of an R Rating from the MPA. And this kind of bloody violence helps reinforce the idea that this version of *Dr. Strange 2* – though it is still PG-13 – belongs in the Horror subgenre rather than the Fantasy subgenre.

- **Strange Academy**: In memory of his friend's sacrifice, Wong will institute a new school for those who are able to use magic and the Kamar Taj will take it upon themselves to find these young individuals spread throughout the world and train them. Wong will name the school "Strange Academy", with Scarlet Witch and Sara joining as instructors while Wong oversees the school as the headmaster. For those of you who may be unfamiliar, Strange Academy is basically the Marvel Comics equivalent of Hogwarts, just a bit weirder and spookier.