

# **Pastwatch**

by  
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Based on the novel by  
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EXT STRAITS OF GIBRALTAR DAY

We hover far above the Mediterranean sea, looking straight down at the rippling waves. We move quickly and mechanically. First north, then east, then a little south, as though searching for something.

TITLE - Rendering ... ccolumbus\_vision.ts2

TITLE - Straits of Gibraltar

TITLE - August 5, 1475

We find what we are searching for. Below us, a sea battle rages between a Spanish pirate ship and an Italian merchantman.

We DIVE in for a closer look. These old ships have no cannon. The pirates have grappled the merchantman with hooks and ropes, and are pulling her in for the kill. The crews of both ships are anxiously gripping their swords.

We RUSH IN to a CLOSE-UP of the Italian merchant captain. He is CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS, years before his historic voyage. His bright red hair is tossed by the wind as his eyes take in the scene.

COLUMBUS

We're lost.

The SHIP'S BOY looks up at Columbus, terrified.

The ships CRASH together. The pirates leap eagerly into the fray. Within moments, half a dozen Italians are dead.

Columbus pulls up a trap door under the helm, and gets out a crate of oil pots.

COLUMBUS (cont'd)

A torch! Get me a torch!

The ship's boy rushes to obey. Columbus takes a pot and lights its wick. Already, the pirates are cutting their way to him. He has seconds.

SHIP'S BOY

Sir! Their ship is too close!

COLUMBUS

We're not burning their ship.

Columbus drops the burning pot into the crate, lifts the crate over his head, and FLINGS it onto his own deck.

The deck EXPLODES in a fireball. None of the surviving Italians are near enough to the blast, but several pirates are engulfed in the flames. In moments, both ships are afire.

COLUMBUS (cont'd)  
You won't have this cargo!

Most of the Italian sailors dive overboard, while the pirates try desperately to put out the flames. A few of the pirates mount the afterdeck and rush Columbus.

In one swift motion, Columbus grabs the ship's boy and flings him overboard, then dives after him. A sword bites the railing behind them.

In the water, the boy struggles and gasps. He can't swim. Columbus grabs him under the arms and drags him onto a floating barrel fragment.

COLUMBUS (cont'd)  
Kick! Toward the shore!

The frightened boy nods and starts to kick. Behind him, the entire deck is afire. The sails are burning. The pirates begin to abandon ship. They hit the water all around Columbus, knives in hand.

Before they can surface, Columbus DIVES underwater, and swims away from the sinking wreckage.

Soon, Columbus has left the battle behind him.

EXT GIBRALTAR SHORE EVENING

Columbus rides a breaker into shore, then tries to stand up. His legs fail him, and he collapses facefirst into the water. Another wave hits him. Sputtering, he drags himself onto dry sand and passes out.

TIME PASSES IN FAST-FORWARD until the sun is just about to rise. The falling tide has left Columbus alone in a vast stretch of empty sand.

His breathing changes. He COUGHS into the sand.

VOICE (O.S.)  
Cristoforo Colombo.

Columbus tries to pry his eyes open, but they resist him.

VOICE (O.S.) (cont'd)  
Cristobal Colon.

Columbus manages to turn his head and look up. He stops. Then without taking his eyes off the speaker, he pulls himself onto his knees. Then he bends down and kisses the earth.

We TURN to see what he sees. Above him, shrouded in glorious light, is an image of the HOLY TRINITY, standing in the air. JESUS CHRIST stretches forth his hand.

JESUS CHRIST  
Christopher Columbus.

FREEZE FRAME. We hear an older woman's voice.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)  
That is not God.

PULL OUT to reveal that the scene we have been watching in 1475 is actually a holographic image on the TruSite II, an advanced past-watching device.

INT TRUSITE BAY NIGHT

Three figures are gathered around the TruSite II in a darkened room, studying the scene. The voice belongs to TAGIRI, an older African woman with a clipped English accent and a look of authority.

The man at the controls is HUNAHPU, a young Mexican Indian in a loose tie and untucked shirt.

HUNAHPU  
Really, Miss Tagiri? I thought we'd finally make a Catholic out of you.

TAGIRI  
It could be ... a psychic phenomenon. Or ... primitive magic. Not real magic, but some kind of ...

She is interrupted by DIKO, a young black woman who sits only inches from Hunahpu. They are clearly very close.

DIKO  
Mum. Stop looking ridiculous. We know it isn't God.

TAGIRI  
And you're just loving this, aren't you, Diko?

Diko smirks and takes the controls. She peels the ground away in the image to reveal a metal sphere buried beneath the Trinity. She selects the sphere, and the TruSite II displays a schematic.

DIKO  
It's a holoprojector.

TAGIRI  
One of ours?

HUNAHPU  
No, we checked that first. It's like nothing we've ever built.

TAGIRI  
Well, how did it get there?

DIKO  
See if you can guess.

Diko presses PLAY.

EXT GIBRALTAR SHORE BEFORE SUNRISE

Columbus looks up from the earth as Jesus Christ begins to speak.

JESUS CHRIST  
You have been chosen for a mission.

Columbus begins to look concerned.

JESUS CHRIST (cont'd)  
You will travel to a land so far to the east that you must sail west to get there. You will be the first Christian man to see its shores. You will convert the natives to my Gospel, and bring their gold back with you to Europe. Your name will be hailed for eternity as discoverer, conquerer, and man of God.

Columbus crosses himself and bows his head. We can see the excitement in his eyes, hear his quickened breath.

JESUS CHRIST (cont'd)  
Tell no one of this vision, or you shall be cast out at the judgment. Farewell, and amen.

Jesus Christ steps back to join his Father and the Dove, and then the Trinity begins to FADE.

Columbus BOWS himself to the earth and kisses the sand.

COLUMBUS

Thank you, Lord. Thank you.

FREEZE FRAME.

INT TRUSITE BAY NIGHT

Tagiri stares in awe.

DIKO

What do you think, Mum?

TAGIRI

I thought time travel was impossible.

DIKO

We've been watching the past for decades. Sooner or later-

TAGIRI

So this "trinity" ... they're from our future?

VOICE

Close.

The lights come on. An older Turkish man (KEMAL) in a tan suit is leaning against the wall next to the switch.

KEMAL

They're from an alternate future.

Tagiri rankles at his authoritative voice. Clearly, he makes her uncomfortable.

KEMAL (cont'd)

Columbus had no dreams of sailing west. He wanted to liberate the holy land. He probably would have, if these meddlers hadn't sent him to America. With that one stroke, they created our entire history.

Kemal does not try to hide the admiration in his voice.

TAGIRI

But the Portugese were already skirting Brazil. They would have found America anyway.

KEMAL

Brazil was a trackless wilderness back then. There was no reason to land. The only reason anyone explored this vast, worthless continent was Christopher Columbus and his gold.

Diko and Hunahpu look at each other. They've heard this speech before, and they don't like losing the spotlight.

TAGIRI

But he never saw more than a handful of gold.

KEMAL

He didn't have to! God had told him there was gold, and so he kept on preaching it year after year.

HUNAHPU

Until finally someone met my people and made it true.

Tagiri silently concedes the point. She studies the fading Trinity in the image.

TAGIRI

But why would they do that? Why would time travelers help the Europeans enslave the world?

HUNAHPU

Look at them. They're white people.

Diko KICKS him.

HUNAHPU (cont'd)

Alright. No. It's worse than that. Without Columbus, the Aztecs would have conquered Europe.

TAGIRI

What!

Hunahpu begins to pull TruSite hard-renderings out of a briefcase.

HUNAHPU

They didn't have the technology in fourteen ninety-two, but they were right on the cusp. See here, this could be a bellows. And look. An early rudder and sail.

Kemal steps between Hunahpu and Tagiri. Hunahpu GLARES at him behind his back.

KEMAL

With iron weapons and long-range ships, the Aztecs could conquer the world, sacrificing anyone who stood in their way.

HUNAHPU

Well, I wouldn't go that far ...

KEMAL

Your ancestors would. Think about it, Tagiri. A world where white and black alike are slaves to a bloodthirsty nation of-

HUNAHPU

That's enough!

KEMAL

-savages who mutilate their victims and drink their blood-

DIKO

Kemal! She gets the point!

Kemal gives Tagiri a maniacal smile and stands down. Tagiri is clearly shaken.

DIKO (cont'd)

So what we're saying, mum-

KEMAL

Diko, I still don't think-

DIKO

She deserves to know, Kemal! She trained us both since we were toddlers.

Hunahpu concurs. Kemal shrugs and turns away. It's your funeral.

Diko takes a deep breath and goes on.



DIKO (cont'd)  
Mum. Kemal has built a time  
machine.

KEMAL  
I didn't build the-

DIKO  
His friends have built a time  
machine, and we're going to use it.

Tagiri stammers for a moment. She can't believe her ears.

TAGIRI  
To do what, may I ask? To screw up  
history more than we already have?

DIKO  
To fix our mistakes.

Diko points at the Trinity.

DIKO (cont'd)  
All they sent was a recording.  
Maybe it was all they could afford  
to do. We're in better shape.

HUNAHPU  
Marginally better ...

DIKO  
We're well enough off to send a  
person. Three people.

Tagiri looks from Diko to Hunahpu to Kemal.

TAGIRI  
Three people. Why not four? Afraid  
I'd be a wet blanket?

KEMAL  
It's all our device can handle.  
We're sending Hunahpu to the  
Aztecs, while Diko and I meet  
Columbus on Haiti.

TAGIRI  
To do what? Kill him?

KEMAL  
No! If Columbus succeeds, the  
Europeans ruin the world. But if he  
fails, then the Aztecs do it.

TAGIRI

Then it's a catch-22.

DIKO

Not quite. If we strand Columbus in Haiti, we can use him to build a new empire. One where Americans and Europeans are equals.

HUNAHPU

Hopefully, we can teach them a few hard-won values. Before they screw the planet up.

TAGIRI

What happens to the rest of us who stay behind?

An uncomfortable silence.

KEMAL

We think we might create a branch in the timeline-

TAGIRI

Bullshit, we'll all be dead, won't we?

The room erupts in explanations.

KEMAL

No, like I told you, the scientists say-

HUNAHPU

Isn't it worth it to give my people a-

DIKO

Mum, look, I know this is hard to-

TAGIRI

Quiet!

Tagiri breathes twice before going on.

TAGIRI (cont'd)

I'll go to the press about this. The people of the world will not let you steal their lives for the sake of your god complex!

The room is silent. Kemal and Hunahpu are staring at Diko.

TAGIRI (cont'd)  
What is it?

DIKO  
The facility's under lockdown, Mum.  
Orders of the council. You can't  
leave or call out.

HUNAHPU  
The machine's already here.

Tagiri is shocked.

TAGIRI  
When are you planning to do this?

KEMAL  
Tomorrow morning. Early.

Tagiri is flustered. She has nothing left to argue with.

TAGIRI  
Excuse me.

Tagiri palms open the door and walks out of the room.

EXT JUBA NIGHT

The Trusite Bay is inside an authentic African hut in the village of Juba, Sudan. While bearing all of the most modern conveniences, the village is meticulously designed to appear as quaint as possible.

Tagiri, her hands shaking, walks out and makes her way quickly toward her own hut.

In moments, Diko emerges and chases her down. She catches Tagiri's arm.

DIKO  
Mum, please understand-

TAGIRI  
Go! Let me alone!

Tagiri shakes her off and keeps moving, leaving Diko in a cloud of kicked-up dust.