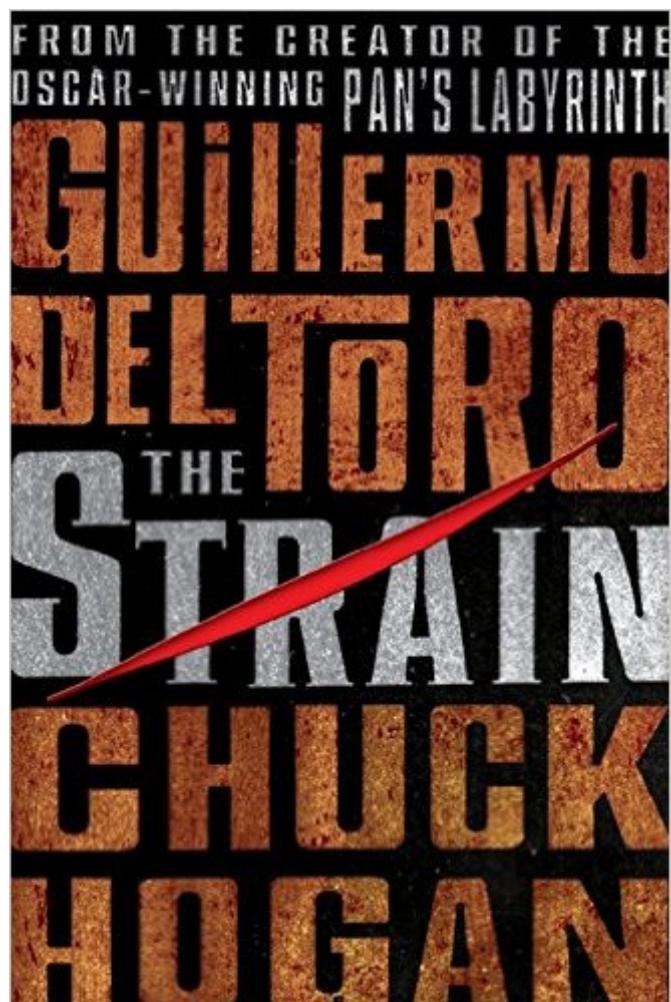


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The Strain: Book One Of The Strain Trilogy



Synopsis

Siempre han estado aquí. Vampiros. En la oscuridad y en secreto. Esperando. Ahora ha llegado su momento. En una semana, tomarán Manhattan. En un mes, el país entero. En dos meses, el mundo. El visionario creador de la película ganadora del Oscar El laberinto del Fauno y un escritor ganador del Hammett Award, vuelcan sus imaginaciones en esta audaz novela épica sobre una horrorosa batalla entre hombre y vampiro que amenaza a toda la humanidad. Es la primera entrega de una espeluznante trilogía y un evento editorial internacional extraordinario. --This text refers to an alternate Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Well, if you're idea of fun includes vampires, biological horror, scary folk tales, and the undead walking the earth, then I have a recommendation for you: THE STRAIN - book one of the trilogy of novels from Guillermo Del Toro and Chuck Hogan. If you're a big GDT fan then you are getting some classic, old school Guillermo here. This is his triumphant return to horror in a whole new medium. The end result? BLADE 2 meets CSI. THE STRAIN is not a meditation like PAN'S LABYRINTH, or a metaphorical folk tale like THE DEVIL'S BACKBONE. It is an in-your-face horror thriller that is not for the squeamish. Needless to say, I really enjoyed this book. It is very well written and honestly, I couldn't put it down. For my money, nothing holds my interest like a vampire plague, and this book has some cool new twists to the vampire mythology. The premise of a vampire

"infecting" its victims with a virus is not completely new: I've seen the idea before. What THE STRAIN does well is explore the infection of the unfortunate victim in great detail. The main character of THE STRAIN is Ephraim Goodweather, epidemiologist for the Center of Disease Control. His investigation as to the nature of this sudden and mysterious plague requires understanding the nature and effects of the virus itself. In other words, the entire book is like playing in GDT's sandbox of the scientifically weird and grotesque. It is a medical journal for Guillermo's vision of the ultimate vampire. Talk about Gross Anatomy. But let's not forget Mr. Hogan's contributions. A master mystery writer (PRINCE OF THIEVES), Hogan's sense of pacing and suspense complements Guillermo's sense of fantasy and horror perfectly - although from what Guillermo has said, it appears Chuck has a prolific eye for the macabre as well. He had never written a horror novel until now, but you would never know it. In addition to Ephraim, there is a large cast of characters to this story, ranging from the heroic to the evil to the infected. Particularly ingenious is the character of Vasiliy Fet, a tough pest control expert that lends his expertise to Eph. It turns out that rats aren't all that different from vampires - and Fet uses that to his advantage. Another strong character is the enigmatic Abraham Setrakian. A former professor, and current pawnbroker - his ties to the vampire threat not only go back to the WWII Holocaust Death Camps, but also to his childhood. He may be the best chance mankind has of surviving - too bad he's on heart medication. I won't spoil anything about the vampires for you - that's the best part of the book - but I will say that they bare a striking similarity to the Reapers in BLADE 2. I know Guillermo said that he wasn't able to fully realize the Reapers the way he wanted to in that film, so perhaps this is finally his perfect vision of a vampire: grotesque, horrible, thirsty and a perfect evolutionary predator. The wonderful part about THE STRAIN is that the novel is the perfect medium for bringing GDT's vampires to life. You understand them inside and out (literally), but also you'll get uncomfortable access to the thoughts and fears of those who are infected...or are being infected. And that's stuff you'll never get from a movie, so consider it the ultimate bonus feature.

"The Strain" starts off with a nice hook that pulls you into the story quickly. Unfortunately, it soon bogs down into a pretty standard mishmash of horror/crisis story cliches, including the main character with the failed marriage (cuz he's just so damn dedicated to his job), incompetent bureaucrats, etc., etc., etc. As far as reinventing the vampire genre, as the jacket blurbs claim it does, not so much. They give a virus/parasite (it's a little confusing as to which, actually, since the characters refer to a virus but there are also visible "blood worms" swimming in the blood of the infected, which seems more like a parasite) as the cause, which is different than the traditional

vampire, but certainly has been done before. Probably the most interesting plot development, which is that there are factions within the vampire ranks with differing views about how to interact with humanity, is barely dealt with (probably to be explored in future volumes), but at any rate is certainly not new. I don't mind tinkering with the vampire mythology (especially since there are a number of myths anyway, so there are always some ground rules to set in a vampire story), but "The Strain" seems to have some consistency issues. For example, vampirism has a biological cause, but the infected are unable to cross running water without assistance from living humans. Why? The sleeping in earth myth is attributed to a sort of nesting instinct that the vampires have, rather than to a true need...however, the Master carts a giant coffinful of Romanian soil around the globe with him and takes some risks to recover the coffin when it's threatened (also, one of the human characters refers to needing to purify the earth so the Master can't use the coffin anymore). Since other vampires in the story seem to function just fine without access to dirt, this seems like a lot of trouble to go to for what is essentially comfort. The infected look normal in the early stages, but can be detected by looking at their reflection in a mirror (but only if it is silver-backed, because silver "always reveals the truth")...why is that again? If it's a virus? But probably the worst parts of the book, for me, were the parts that just seemed kinda cheezy. For example, a WWII concentration camp survivor (presumably at least in his 80's, since he was an adult in Treblinka) running around decapitating vampires with a single stroke of his silver rapier. Did I mention that he has a heart condition and at one point had every bone in both hands crushed by a vampire? Seems pretty spry, don't he? Not to mention the whole, "my sword sings of silver" battlecry. I also thought the CDC doctors made the leap from "this virus/parasite is changing people into monsters" to "therefore we must bloodthirstily exterminate the infected" a little too quickly, without even a brief side trip to "is there some way to confine these people and try to develop a treatment?" I could maybe see jumping over that if the main characters were military or law enforcement, but doctors? Doctors usually want to try to treat diseases. Finally, the story feels like it is being padded out to make it a trilogy when it doesn't need to be. Everything covered in the first volume could have easily been compressed into 100 pages or so without losing anything essential (or even particularly interesting).

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