



**DARK
HORSE
COMICS**

THE STRAIN

2 \$3.50

GUILLERMO DEL TORO & CHUCK HOGAN'S

THE STRAIN



DAVID LAPHAM MIKE HUDDLESTON DAN JACKSON

DIRECT SALES



00211

They have always been here.
VAMPIRES.

In secret and in darkness.
WAITING.

Now their time has come.
In one week, Manhattan will be gone.
In one month, the country.
In two months—the world.

GUILLERMO DEL TORO & CHUCK HOGAN'S
THE STRAIN



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ON THREE,
ONE...TWO...

...THREE!

THE
CONTAINER'S
NOT ON THE MANIFEST.
IT SHOULDN'T HAVE
BEEN IN THE PLANE
AT-- *UHH!*

GOOD
LORD, THAT
SMELL.

WHAT
DIED IN
THERE?

NOT DEAD, DANK.
DECOMPOSING...



...RICH...
ALIVE.

SOIL.

LOOK
AT THAT
COLOR. NEAR
BLACK.



WHY
WOULD
SOMEONE
SHIP A
BOX OF
DIRT?

THEY
WOULDN'T.
THERE HAD
TO BE SOME-
THING ELSE
INSIDE.

MAYBE
A WEAPON, OR
A CONTAMINANT
OF SOME
KIND?



WE NEED
TO SAMPLE
THIS SOIL.
STAT.

WHATEVER
HAPPENED TO
THESE PEOPLE MOST
LIKELY STARTED
HERE.

EPH. THE
THREE SURVIVORS
ARE COMING TO.
I'M HAVING THEM
PULL A CAR AROUND
TO GET YOU TWO
OVER TO JAMAICA
HOSPITAL.



NORA, THERE ARE
TWO HUNDRED AND
SIX MEALS SET OUT
THERE AND NOT
ONE FLY.

I COULD PUT
A DEAD RAT OUT
THERE AND THEY'D
BE SWARMING IN
MINUTES.

IT'S THE
GODDAMNEDEST
THING I'VE EVER
SEEN.



STILL NO **RIGOR**
EITHER. THE BODIES
ARE JUST NOT
DECOMPOSING.

EPH, THIS
SCARES ME.

EVERY PIECE OF
ME SCREAMS WE'RE
LOOKING AT AN
EPIDEMIC...

"...I FEEL LIKE IF
WE CAN'T FIGURE
OUT WHAT IT IS
AND **FAST...**

"...A LOT **MORE**
PEOPLE ARE
GOING TO DIE."

JAMAICA
HOSPITAL
MEDICAL
CENTER...

CAPTAIN
REDFERN...

DANGER
ISOLATION
WARD
AUTHORIZED
PERSONNEL
ONLY!!
QUARANTINE

CAPTAIN REDFERN, I'M
DR. EPHRAIM GOODWEATHER,
CHIEF EPIDEMIOLOGIST OF
THE C.D.C.'S CANARY RAPID
RESPONSE TEAM...

...AND
THIS IS MY
COLLEAGUE
NORA
MARTINEZ.

GOOD
TO SEE YOU
AWAKE, SIR.
HOW DO YOU
FEEL?

NNN...I'VE
BEEN WORSE.
BUT NOT BY
MUCH...

WE'LL GET
YOU SOME-
THING FOR
THAT.

I'M THE
ONE WHO
FOUND YOU
ALIVE ON THE
PLANE.

WHAT...
NNN...

...WHAT
HAPPENED
ON THE PLANE?

WE...
WERE HOPING
YOU COULD
TELL US.

L-LOOK...IT'S
VERY IMPORTANT
I CONTACT MY
WIFE AND
KIDS...

MY WIFE DOESN'T DRIVE
AND WE DIDN'T PLAN ON
ME BEING GONE LONGER
THAN THE BUSINESS
TRIP...

THE
DOGS, TOO.
IT'S--IT'S A LOT TO
MANAGE THE KIDS AND
THE DOGS...THEY'RE BIG.
SAINT BERNARDS...

...M-MY WIFE FEELS
MORE SECURE WHEN I'M
GONE--WITH THE BIG DOGS,
BUT THEY'RE A HANDFUL. I HAD
TO INSTALL CHAINS IN THE SHED FOR
WHEN THEY GET TO BE TOO MUCH.
O-OTHERWISE THEY RIP UP THE HOUSE
AT NIGHT. WE JUST GOT A NEW SOFA--

MR.
BARBOUR--
ANSEL--

--DO YOU REMEMBER THE
LANDING ON THE
PLANE? ANYTHING
UNUSUAL? PEOPLE
YELLING...ODD
SMELLS...?

NO.
NOTHING...
MAYBE I HAVE
AMNESIA... OH
GOD...

WHAT IF
I FORGET OUR
ANNIVERSARY?

DUDE,
CAN I GET
SOME PAINKILLERS
FOR MY NECK?
DEMEROL? OXY?
WHEN'S THE
REFRESHMENT
CART COME
BY?

MR. BOLIVAR,
ONBOARD THE
PLANE WAS A LARGE
CABINET. VERY GOTHIC
LOOKING AND
ORNATE.

SEEMED
LIKE THE KIND OF
THING SOMEONE
LIKE YOU WOULD
COLLECT.

ARE YOU KIDDING?
THAT SHIT'S AN **ACT**,
DUDE. GOTTA PAINT AND
HARDCORE LYRICS
PACK ARENAS AND
SELL ALBUMS.

LOOK IT UP. MY FATHER
WAS A METHODIST
PREACHER AND THE
ONLY THING I COLLECT
IS **PUSSY**.

WELL, IT'S TRUE. COCKROACHES
SURVIVE ANYTHING.

JIM, I WANT
FULL QUARANTINE
ON THOSE THREE UNTIL
WE GET A COMPLETE
WORKUP. AS CLOSE AS
WE CAN GET TO A FULL
AUTOPSY WITHOUT
KILLING THEM.

TELL
THE NURSES TO
KEEP BOLIVAR'S CELL
PHONE AWAY FROM HIM.
A GUY LIKE THAT CAN
CAUSE PLENTY OF
PROBLEMS.

I'M
ON TOP
OF IT.

NOW WE
NEED TO GET
YOU BACK TO
J.F.K. DIRECTOR
BARNES, HE'S WAITING
WITH THE MAYOR AND
GOVERNOR FOR THE
PRESS BRIEFING.

YOU'RE
SHITTING
ME?

THEY
WANT TO GET IT
IN BEFORE THE
ECLIPSE.

THE...?

OH...
DAMN.

822221

EPH.

IT'S
ZACK. AS
IF ON
CUE...

Caller: ZACK

YANKS 4 SUX 2.
Gr8 seats. Wish u
wer here. Z.

CHESAPEAKE BAY,
DARK HARBOR, VIRGINIA...

TODAY
ON "MONEY
ROUNDTABLE" WE'LL
BE DISCUSSING
THE STONEHEART
GROUP.

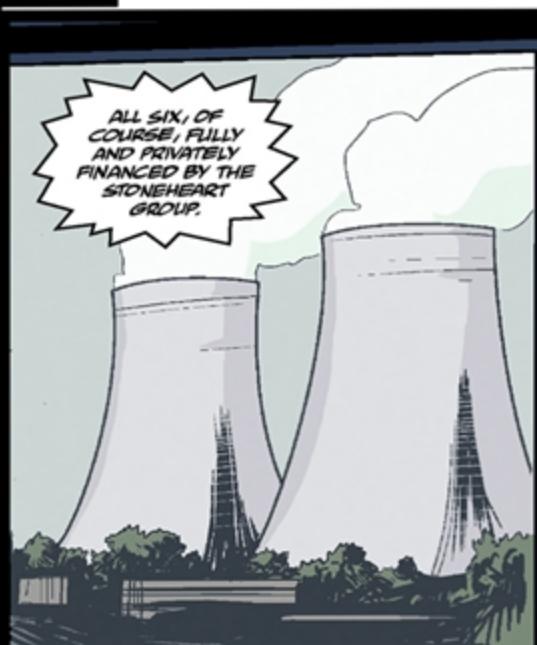
WHILE OTHERS,
LIKE BILL GATES AND
WARREN BUFFETT,
CONTINUALLY MAKE
THE NEWS...

...THE
STONEHEART GROUP
AND ITS ENIGMATIC
MASTERMIND, ELDITCH
PALMER, HAVE QUIETLY
AMASSED A PORTFOLIO
PERHAPS GREATER THAN
BOTH THOSE MEN.

THEIR LATEST
COUP HAS THE
ENERGY-FUTURES
MARKET ABUZZ...

...AS WE'RE
LESS THAN A MONTH
AWAY FROM THE FIRST
OF SIX NUCLEAR
ENERGY PLANTS TO
COME ONLINE.

SWSHHH
SHOOOO
SWSHHH
SHOOOO





A NEW HEART,
NEW KIDNEYS,
PANCREAS, THREE
LIVERS...

...FOUR
HOURS A DAY OF
HAVING MY BLOOD
CLEANSED OF
IMPURITIES. LIVING
IN A MEAT
LOCKER.



WATCHING
PLASTIC FERNS
FADE IN THE
SUN.



WE ARE CONFIDENT
BASED ON EXPERIENCE
AND ALL AVAILABLE
EVIDENCE THAT THIS
IS AN ISOLATED
INCIDENT...

BUT I LIVE.
THIRTY-SIX
YEARS PAST MY
EXPIRATION DATE
I STILL LIVE.



SOON THAT
WILL BE THE
ONLY MEASURE
OF A MAN'S
WEALTH.



MR. FITZWILLIAM,
PLEASE SEE IF
THEY'RE READY WITH
THE HELICOPTER.

I'D LIKE TO INTRODUCE DR.
EPHRAIM GOODWEATHER,
THE C.D.C.'S LEAD
INVESTIGATOR. HE'LL BE
ABLE TO MORE FULLY ALLAY
YOUR CONCERNS...



"IT'S TIME TO
RELOCATE TO
OUR MANHATTAN
OFFICES."

WELL, I--REALLY COULDN'T SPECULATE UNTIL ALL OUR TEST RESULTS ARE IN, BUT DIRECTOR BARNES IS CORRECT. NO OTHER SIMILAR OCCURRENCES HAVE BEEN REPORTED...

AT THIS TIME...

THAT'S REALLY ALL I HAVE. WE TAKE THESE MATTERS SERIOUSLY AND WILL REPORT MORE WHEN THE FACTS ARE KNOWN...UM...THANK YOU.

WELL, LOOKS LIKE ANSWERS ARE NOT FORTH-COMING FROM THE C.D.C. IN THE J.F.K. TRAGEDY.

PICK
PICK
PICK


BUT IN OTHER NEWS, WE'RE JUST MINUTES AWAY FROM A RARE EVENT IN THE CITY. A SOLAR ECLIPSE.

TO EXPLAIN MORE WE'VE BROUGHT IN OUR OWN DR. PATEL. DOCTOR, TELL US ABOUT THIS NATURAL WONDER.


WELL, JOAN, IT'S A FUNNY THING IN THAT WE CALL THE EVENT A SOLAR ECLIPSE--

--BUT THE TRUE SCIENTIFIC WORD FOR WHAT'S HAPPENING IS OCCULTATION.

THE MOON ACTUALLY "OCCULTS" THE SUN--IT BLOCKS OR HIDES IT BY PASSING IN FRONT OF IT, YOU SEE?



"--AND CASTS
ITS OWN SHADOW
ON THE EARTH.



"IT'S A VERY RARE OCCURRENCE IN
THE CITY, BECAUSE ONLY A SMALL PART
OF THE EARTH IS IN THE COMPLETE
SHADOW OF THE MOON..."



CHECK IT, MATT.
IT LOOKS LIKE AN
EYE. AN EVIL
ZOMBIE
EYE.

YOU'RE A
STRANGE BOY,
ZACK.



**BRAIN-EATING
ZOMBIES FROM THE
MOOOON!...**

"ALSO REMEMBER, IT'S
VERY IMPORTANT TO WEAR
PROTECTIVE GLASSES.

"TO NOT DO SO COULD
CAUSE PERMANENT
HARM TO THE RETINA..."

"...EVEN BLINDNESS."











THE VAN IS AT J.F.K.'S LONG-TERM LOT. KEYS AND FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS WILL BE IN THE GLOVE COMPARTMENT.

THIS IS JUST FOR DRIVING A TRUCK, MAN?

NO STOPS NOW, MR. ELIZALDE. WE KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU. WE KNOW ABOUT YOUR SEALED JUVENILE MANSLAUGHTER CONVICTION--

--WE KNOW WHERE YOUR MOTHER LIVES.

YOU THREATEN MI MADRE, MAN?

FUCK YOU!

WHAT ARE YOU, SOME KIND OF TERRORIST?

"HEY, MAN. DON'T YOU WALK AWAY. DRIVE YOUR OWN FUCKIN' VAN. **FUCK YOU!**"

FUCKIN' A, MAN. YOU'RE FUCKIN' WRONG IN THE HEAD, MAN.

"DON' EVEN KNOW WHAT THE FUCK YOU'RE CARRYIN' BACK THERE..."



FLATBUSH...

I TELL YOU,
ANN-MARIE,
YOUR HUSBAND IS
A LUCKY MAN.
YES, SIR.

ONE OF THE
OTHER SURVIVORS
WAS SOME BIG
FAMOUS ROCK STAR.
HIS LAWYERS CAME
DOWN AND GOT US
ALL RELEASED.

I THINK I
COULD HAVE BEEN
HELD THERE ALL
WEEK!

OH, ANSEL,
THE CHILDREN
MISSED YOU
SO MUCH.

THE DOGS,
TOO. PAP
AND GERTIE
WERE VERY
RESTLESS.

ALMOST
TOO MUCH
FOR ME TO
HANDLE. WHAT
WOULD I HAVE
DONE?

ANSEL, EVEN BEFORE YOU TOOK
OFF, I FELT GOD HAD ABANDONED
THAT PLANE.

I TELL
YOU, ANSEL,
I'VE
JUST BEEN PRAYING
AND PRAYING
NONSTOP...

...SNIFF...
NONSTOP...

YET HERE I
AM, SWEETIE.
REMEMBER, I'M
ONE OF THE
LUCKY ONES.

HON, COULD YOU
GET ME SOME
WATER FOR MY
THROAT?

I THINK I'M COMING
DOWN WITH SOME-
THING.

IT'S A
CLEAN BREACH
RIGHT INTO THE
CAROTID.

OFFICE OF
THE CHIEF
MEDICAL
EXAMINER,
MANHATTAN...

IT'S ALMOST
INVISIBLE.

DO YOU HAVE
A THEORY?

WHAT MADE
IT, I CAN'T EVEN
IMAGINE. NOTICE THE
SCALPEL-LIKE PRECISION,
LIKE FROM A CALIBRATED
INSTRUMENT, BUT THE
EDGES ARE ROUNDED,
ORGANIC IN
APPEARANCE.

ITS
PURPOSE,
THOUGH, WAS
CLEARLY TO DRAIN
THE **BLOOD** OUT OF
THESE
PEOPLE.

IF
YOU'LL NOTICE
THERE'S NOT A
DROP OF BLOOD IN
THIS ROOM. NOR IN
ANY OF THESE
BODIES.

NOT
RED BLOOD,
ANYWAY.

WHAT'S THAT
MEAN?

WATCH.

SEE?
THICK, LIKE
SPOILED
MILK.

AT FIRST I THOUGHT THEY WERE PROTEINS SEPARATING, BUT IT'S NOT THAT.

THESE BODIES ARE FILLED WITH IT. IT'S LIKE THEY'VE BEEN EMBALMED.

THE METHODOLOGY ON THIS IS WRONG. WE'RE CUTTING INTO THEM LIKE THEY ALL JUST DRANK POISON KOOL-AID.



I AGREE. THERE ARE REACTIONS STILL GOING ON INSIDE THESE CORPSES. MAYBE PARASITIC, MAYBE CHEMICAL...

THE BODIES ARE WARM. **VERY WARM.** SOMEHOW THEY'RE STILL GENERATING HEAT. AND THERE'S SPOTTING ON THE ORGANS--LIKE THEY'RE **BRUISING.**

WE NEED TO REINVENT THE WHEEL ON THIS ONE.



BRING IN A FRESH BATCH OF BODIES. RESTART FROM SQUARE ONE.



THESE PEOPLE WEREN'T KILLED OR POISONED OR GASED. THEY'RE **INFECTED.**

WHICH MEANS WE NEED TO LOCK THIS THING DOWN IMMEDIATELY.

BARBOUR WAS COMPLAINING ABOUT HIS NECK.



CALL KENT, TELL HIM GO TO A LEVEL FOUR. FULL CONTAINMENT. HAVE THEM CHECK FOR NECK INCISIONS ON THE THREE SURVIVORS--

DR. GOODWEATHER?





MY NAME IS **ABRAHAM SETRAKIAN**.

WHAT I HAVE TO SAY, DOCTOR, IS VERY IMPORTANT. **CRITICAL.**

IF **ANY** OF US ARE GOING TO SURVIVE THE COMING NIGHTS.



ANSEL?

ANSEL, I-IT'S BEEN AN HOUR.



ANSEL, I--HAVE MORE WATER. I DISSOLVED SOME ADVIL IN IT LIKE YOU ASKED...

FOR YOUR THROAT.



**CHHT--
CHHT--**

ANSEL?

ARE--
ARE PAP
AND GERTIE
IN THERE WITH
YOU?

I THOUGHT
I HEARD
WHIMPERING.

ANSEL?...

ANSEL?...

**CHHT--
CHHT--**

GET
AWAY
FROM
THE DOOR!
WE'RE
FINE!

EVERY-
THING'S
FINE!

NEXT: FIRST NIGHT

PANDEMIC POST

Send your letters to thetrain@darkhorse.com.

At the time of this writing, issue #1 has not yet hit the stands or found its way to readers' hands. I hope that our next letter column will be filled with your questions and comments about this fantastically terrifying comic. In the meantime, we have some awesome concept drawings from artist Mike Huddleston to share, with commentary from my fellow editor Jim Gibbons. This was originally featured on the Dark Horse blog:



Here's Mike Huddleston's first full sketch of one of the big, nasty vampires from *The Strain*. These vile creatures are very well described in the novels, and after we tracked down an insane amount of references in the source material for Mike, he piled all that prose into his brain, and this awesome monster is what came out when pencil hit paper.

Getting to be a fly on the proverbial wall as Guillermo del Toro and Mike figure out some of the details of these monsters has been a treat. The two are very well paired when it comes to collaborating on these horrid bloodsuckers. Del Toro's creature pedigree is well known, but take a look at some of Mike's initial notes

for Guillermo from this round of sketches and you'll see he's a similarly mad monster genius:

"If this large stinger organ is connected in the mouth, when it is recoiled inside could the weight pull the skin of the mouth and face inward? If the skin covered the teeth, it would be an 'anti-vampire' from what we traditionally see."

"Can we have the neck area be an area of color to add interest, AKA turkey neck?"

"Any chance of mutating vampires with multiple or weird stingers?"

"If the neck swells to hold the stinger, I thought it would be cool to see a fat guy with a huge stinger that looks like a bullfrog when his stinger is recoiled."

You'll have to read the series to see what came out of the resulting conversations about these vampires, but seeing how Mike puzzled out the physiology of the monsters should be fascinating and enticing for horror fans.

Thanks for tuning in!

Sierra Hahn
Editor



The Strain contaminates Times Square!
NEXT MONTH *The Strain* #3

HORSEPOWER

Man, I love that show. I love that show so much I don't really get people who don't love that show.

Folks talk about the martial-arts action, the sidesplitting humor, and the three-dimensional characters, but really, "three-dimensional" doesn't cover it. Aang, Katara, and company aren't just well written; they're *alive*. I swear, more than once, I've felt Appa's breath on my face. (No, I do not do drugs. Yes, I do sit too close to the screen.)

Appa, for those who've never seen an episode of Nickelodeon's *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, is the giant flying bison that our young protagonists ride from town to town, adventure to adventure. Let me repeat the important parts of that sentence. *Giant! Flying! Bison!* Seriously, if you don't love that show, I don't think we can be friends.

For me personally, though, the appeal of the show goes beyond Appa's breath.

When I was a kid, my Chinese immigrant mother used to tell me stories at bedtime, the same stories she heard when she was a kid. I listened wide eyed as moon goddesses, talking forest creatures, and corrupt magistrates committed acts of heroic self-sacrifice and unspeakable evil. Sure, her stories were exciting, but they also carried echoes of a culture that I found all around me at home, yet only experienced secondhand.

As I followed the last Airbender on his journey to save the world, I felt the same stirring inside that I used to get from my mother's stories.

Avatar cocreators Michael Dante DiMartino and Bryan Konietzko and their team drew from Asian cultures and Asian mythology to construct a fully realized fantasy world, complete with a kung-fu-based magic system. When we walk the streets of the Fire Nation, we visit

Meiji-era Japan. After pushing through the gates of the Earth King's palace, we find ourselves in the Forbidden City during the last decades of Qing-dynasty China. When Appa lands near the ruins of the Southern Air Temple, we discover Tibetan artifacts at our feet. When Yue, princess of the Northern Water Tribe, sacrifices herself for the Four Nations, she reenacts the drama of Chang'e, the Chinese moon goddess. These are real-world cultures as seen through the lens of myth, and the results are pure magic.

They're also no accident. As evidenced by Dark Horse's *The Art of Avatar: The Last Airbender*, Mike, Bryan, and their team researched relentlessly. (Full disclosure: I don't get a penny for plugging the art book. Unfortunately.) They studied Asian art, Asian architecture, Asian clothing, and Asian philosophy. They involved their Korean animation partners in a way that was unprecedented for an American studio.

And that's one of the reasons why my involvement in the *Avatar* comics has been such a thrill. As I work through the scripts, I'm playing in a world described not only by the Nickelodeon cartoon, but also by my mother's stories. Together with Mike, Bryan, and the ubertalented Japanese art team Gurihiru, I now have the chance to bring a bit of the show's magic into the panels of my favorite medium.

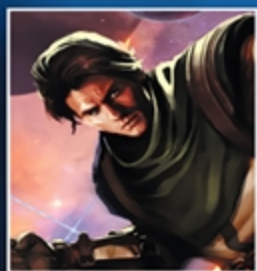
Will we succeed? That's for you to decide. When *Avatar: The Last Airbender—The Promise Part 1* comes out in January, pick up a copy and read it up close, just a couple of inches from your nose. Let me know if you feel Appa's breath on your face.

Gene Yang



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DARK HORSE HEROES!



He's living proof that the Force has a sense of humor—and it isn't done with him yet. Jedi-turned-con artist **Zayne Carrick** is back, and so's his bad luck: He's been drafted! How do you fight Mandalorians when you won't kill? Find out this month when Zayne returns in *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic—War #1*.



Teresa Gresham is the best receptionist that DH has ever had. E-V-E-R. She keeps our front desk friendly and ultra efficient! She's been happily married for over 17 years, and is mom to a 16-year-old daughter (and two new kittens . . . and about 120 DH employees . . .). Another reason she's the best? She would make Halloween with us every day if she could!