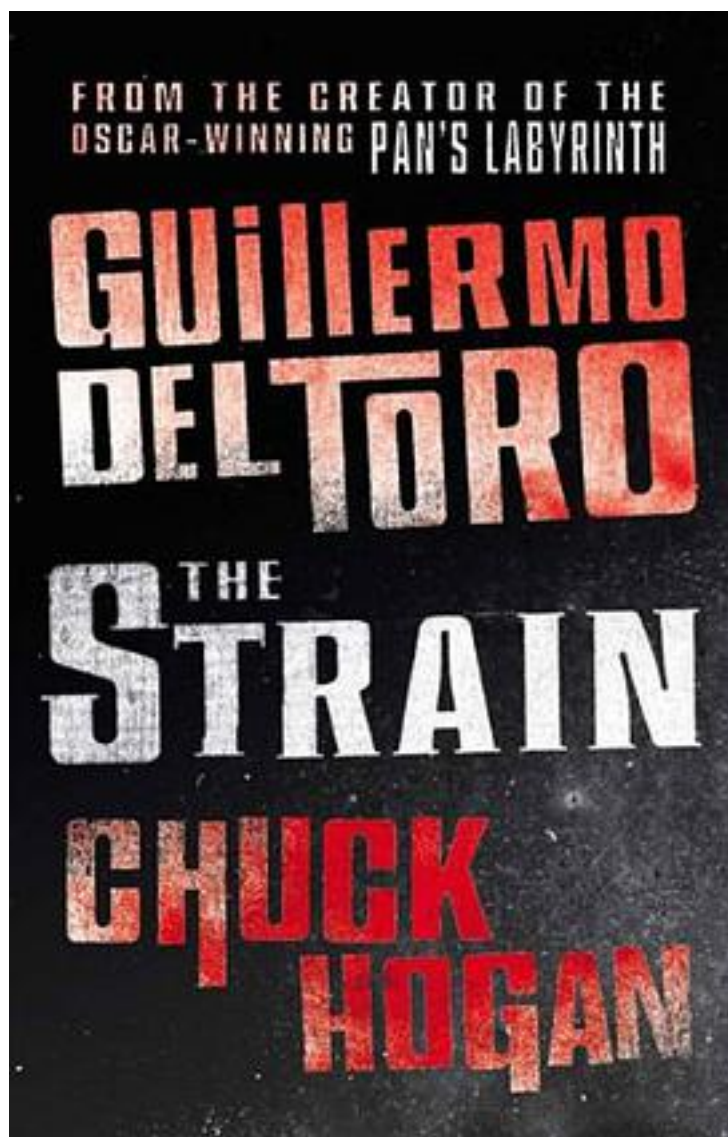


Strain, The



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A state-of-the-art Boeing 777 lands at JFK after a flight from Berlin and is on its way to the gate-when it suddenly goes dark. Just stops dead. The control tower loses contact with the pilot and all electrical activity shuts down. No cell phone or BlackBerry or radio communication. Nada. Window shades are drawn and no one is visible inside. An emergency crew gathers, everyone watching the silent plane now bathed in floodlights, a giant white tombstone looming against the night sky. Then a sliver of black quietly appears on the fuselage. It's a door opening with glacial slowness from within. Dr. Eph Goodweather, head of the CDC's New York team, enters and finds a cabin looking like a winged graveyard where everyone appears to be comatose or dead. As he begins to remove bodies for transport to the morgue, four victims are discovered miraculously alive-and relatively unscathed apart from complaints of disorientation and a strange soreness. Also on board is a container that hasn't been listed on the departure manifest from Berlin-a huge rectangular ebony box with an intricately carved lid. When it's opened, they find it filled with a loamy black soil as soft as cake mix. Eldrich Palmer, a supremely wealthy investor and director of the global Stoneheart Group, monitors the JFK scene on TV from his sickbed where he suffers from the kidney disease that has nearly killed him. Pleased with what he sees, he picks up the phone and summons a helicopter for immediate transport to a Manhattan penthouse. On a quiet street in Queens, Eph's ex-wife Kelley readies herself with the rest of the Eastern United States for the first total lunar eclipse in more than four hundred years, since the advent of America. She battles her phobias and worries about her 11-year-old son, who believes he's more independent than he really is. At the same time, in an old pawn shop in Spanish Harlem, an elderly immigrant, former professor, and survivor of the Nazi concentration camps named Abraham Setrakian takes it all in. He knows that his time has come, that a war is about to begin, and that the Master is Here. So begins an escalating battle of epic proportions as the vampiric virus that has infected the four survivors begins to ravage the city. Eph-guided by Setrakian, and joined by Vassily, a exterminator, Nora, Eph's CDC colleague, and Gus, a Harlem gangbanger-fights his way through the next horrifying days, determined to save his wife and son before the Master succeeds in his unholy mission.

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