

# **The Strain Study Guide**

## **The Strain**

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## Plot Summary

The Strain, written by Guillermo Del Toro and Chuck Hogan, involves the fall of New York City to a virus that turns its hosts into vampires. The vampire's strain of disease infects people instantly. The virus is brought to New York by way of the Seventh Master, one of the original seven vampire Masters. Eldritch Palmer, a decrepit old man, seeks immortality in exchange for the Master's conquering of the world.

Those opposing the Master include Ephraim "Eph" Goodweather, his assistant Nora Martinez, rat catcher-turned vampire hunter Vasiliy Fet, and professor-vampire hunter Abraham Setrakian. Setrakian has encountered the rogue Seventh Master decades before. Eph, Setrakian, and the others discover the lair of the Old Master beneath the World Trade Center site. They battle his minions throughout the city, forcing the Old Master to seek out a new hiding place. The three Masters of the New World decide that, if the Rogue Master wants a war, he will get one.



# The Beginning - Arrival

## Summary

The Beginning - Arrival

The Beginning

Abraham Setakian's grandmother tells him the story of Jusef Sardu, son of a Polish nobleman, a gentle giant in the family's village in the old country. Jusef is very kind, very tall, but very frail. His father seeks to strengthen his son, and so brings his son out on a hunting party to go after wolves. But no one from the hunting party makes it back except Jusef, who locks himself away in his castle. Slowly, over time, children begin disappearing from the village. Most of the village is abandoned over time. When the Nazis invade a decade later, Abraham's grandmother reminds him to keep running as if he was running from Sardu.

On September 24, 2010, Captain Peter J. Moldes of Flight 753 from Berlin to New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport tells his passengers they will be landing momentarily, according to a blackbox recording. This is following by the sound of banging, static, and a high-pitched noise.

The Landing

In JFK's International Control Tower, Jimmy "The Bishop" Mendes guides air traffic safely in. Calvin Buss, Jimmy's supervisor, asks how Regis Flight 753 is doing, and he reports that it is safely down. Buss reveals it is stalled on Runway Foxtrot. They attempt to contact the plane, but do not receive an answer. Lorenza "Lo" Ruiz, working on Terminal Tarmac 3, is sent out to have a look. She is worried because whatever is wrong must have gone wrong in the two or three minutes since touchdown. Lo is further worried by the fact that the airplane seems to be dead, and there is no wind. The shades on the plane are all drawn, but one rises, and Lo knows she is being watched, that something wants to eat her. She races back down the runway as emergency rescue vehicles arrive.

Jimmy, Calvin, and the Port Authority scramble to handle the situation. Jimmy worries it may be a hostage situation. Captain Sean Navarro, leading the rescue vehicles, attempts to get into the plane. He cannot because the over-wing exit is stuck. An airport cart arrives with agents from the Transportation Security Administration. Questions arise as to whether or not Homeland Security should be notified. A call is put out for someone who can speak German. The call is made to cut the plane open, since no air is getting into the plane.

In Dark Harbor, Virginia, on the Chesapeake Bay, Eldritch Palmer, a seventy-six year-old investor, businessman, confidante to the rich and powerful, and theologian enjoys a quiet evening on his seventeen-acre estate. Despite his power, Palmer is continually



going through dialysis to clean his blood. Palmer is aided by Fitzwilliam, head of his security detail, and former U.S. Marine. Palmer is informed about the plane. Palmer orders his helicopter made ready. Meanwhile, oxygen tanks are pushed under the plane to be fed up inside through chop-out sections, purposely designed to be cut out in an emergency. Benny Chufer, one of Navarro's men, points up to the exit door over the wing. It is now open. Sensors lifted to the door test clear for gas and radiation. Commands by bullhorn are issued, but there is no movement inside. Two men, with weapons drawn, are sent into the plane.

### Now Boarding

Ephraim Goodweather and his son Zack are in their Chinatown apartment playing video games. Eph is going through a divorce with Zack's mother Kelly. Eph works for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. He receives a call about the plane at JFK. Everett Barnes, Director of the CDC, puts Eph in command. Homeland Security, as well as the National Transportation Safety Board, are on their way to JFK. Everett reveals that every single person on the plane is dead. Over in Queens, Kelly Goodweather and her boyfriend Matt are just finishing up dinner. Kelly is a fourth grade teacher. Seeing the news about the plane at JFK gives her an uneasy feeling. Eph drops Zack back off at Kelly's. He also gives her baseball tickets for the Yankees, in case he cannot make the game later that day with Zack. Kelly reminds him to be on time to the meeting with Dr. Kempner, the therapist who will determine the custody arrangement of Zack.

At JFK, Eph's team is assembled. Jim Kent handles politics and the bureaucratic side of things, while Nora Martinez serves as the team's biochemist. Eph confirms that HAZMAT is standing by. It appears to be a terrorist attack of some kind. A U.S. Air Marshal is on board, but there has been no contact from him. The team suits up. Eph and Nora head in. In addition to the air marshal, Charpentier, is a German diplomat, Rolph Hubermann, in town for UN Council talks on Korea. They find Charpentier, but can find no signs of struggle or a cause for death. They then find Hubermann, who is the same way. They go up to the cockpit, to find the pilots the same way. Eph suddenly feels as if someone else in the small space with him, but then the feeling passes. One of the captains, Redfern, groans, and it startles Eph. He tells Nora they will have to go through the plane passenger by passenger. Meanwhile, Abaraham Satrakian, watching television in his pawnshop in East Harlem, sees the video of the plane at JFK, and knows "he" is here.

### Arrival

The plane is brought into Regis Air Maintenance Hangar. Teams in HAZMAT suits remove the bodies. The German ambassador and his team wait for word on Hubermann. The bodies will be transported by refrigerated trucks, courtesy of Fulton's Fish Market in Lower Manhattan. The Berlin airport has been shut down and is being searched. Nora reveals that nothing adds up. There is no vomit, blood, or out-of-place bodies consistent with gas. Furthermore, gas cannot knock out a plane. That, in addition to the door being opened, seemingly on its own, does not make sense. There are four survivors, including Redfern. There is also a female lawyer from Westchester County, a



male computer programmer from Brooklyn, and a music celebrity who lives between Manhattan and Miami, Dwight Moorshein, alias Gabriel Bolivar. The luggage is extracted. There is a rectangular black box with carvings, which is not strapped down when found. It is estimated to weigh four-hundred pounds, has some kind of dirt in it, but it is not in the cargo manifest. Nora thinks it looks like an oversized coffin. It is theorized that perhaps the attacker had stowed away in it. Word comes that Eph needs to go to Jamaica Hospital Medical Center.

At the hospital, in the isolation ward, Eph is brought to Captain Redfern, who has no memory of what happened. Eph then goes to see Gabriel Bolivar, who says he feels like he has a bad hangover. He says he probably slept through whatever happened, because he was downing vodka tonics throughout the flight. He denies the black coffin-like box is his. Eph then goes to see Joan Luss, the female lawyer. She feels a little woozy, but says she will be alright. Back at the hangar, Eph is surprised to see there are no flies around the body bags. The bodies themselves are flexible, not rigid. Also, the bodies are not decomposing. Jim Kent arrives with Everett Barnes, CDC Director. Everett is perplexed by everything as well. He makes Eph the point-man for a coming press conference. Eph is also reminded that there will be a rare solar eclipse that afternoon around 3:30, the first time the New York region has had such an event in four hundred years. Eph gets a text from Zach, who tells him that the Yankees are winning. He wishes he was there to see it.

## Analysis

When Guillermo Del Toro and Chuck Hogan's novel *The Strain* begins, a 777 passenger jet lands as normal at JFK International Airport in New York. Then, within minutes, the cockpit goes silent. Upon investigation, the plane is dark, the shades are drawn, and there seems to be no trace of life. Concerned that a biological terrorist attack of some kind may have occurred, Eph Goodweather and his team from the CDC are contacted to investigate. At first, the situation seems routine. Emergency services respond. But, every piece of the puzzle that falls into place seems to point to something terrifying.

The number of people who respond to the situation gives the reader a reason to suspect something sinister. Eldritch Palmer and Abraham Setrakian are among the many people who respond. Palmer deals with money, and Abraham Setrakian is a pawn shop owner. There seems to be absolutely no reason why Palmer should have anything to do with a mysterious jet arrival. Setrakian throws a high degree of caution to the wind by responding to the jet situation. The story involves a changed human being, Josef Sardu, and the abandoning of the village in which he lives following his changing.

There four survivors and more than two hundred dead on the plane. Eph wonders if they are dealing with a new kind of biological threat. To make the situation more confusing, a large, black coffin-like box in on the plane. It is filled with dark soil. The box is not part of the plane's manifest. They believe that the attacker must have stowed away inside the box. However, they do not know the name of the attacker.



## Discussion Question 1

Why does Eph suspect the plane and its passengers are victims of some kind of biological attack?

## Discussion Question 2

What evidence suggests the people on the plane are not victims of a biological attack?

## Discussion Question 3

How is it possible that Eph and the others do not recognize the large, oblong black box as a coffin?

## Vocabulary

Ravenous, palpable, equivocally, peculiarities, dormant, bewildering, labyrinthine, melodramatic, symbiotically, cursory.



# Occultation - The First Night

## Summary

Occultation - The First Night

Occultation

The term “solar eclipse” is a misnomer. Eclipses occur when something passes into a shadow cast by something else. The moon, passing into the path of the sun and causing shadow, is properly called “occultation.” Kelly watches the event from Kelton Street in Woodside, Queens. Though she is well-educated and knows what is going on, she feels panicked by it. She chalks it up to the incident at JFK. Meanwhile, Zack continues to watch the ball game with Matt, stopping to look at the eclipse. Zack hopes his dad will respond to his text message, but the solar event has thrown the radio waves and orbiting satellites off. Meanwhile, two-hundred-twenty miles above Earth, on the International Space Station, American flight engineer Thalia Charles is in the Unity module of the Destiny lab mod. The eclipse makes it look like Earth has a dead spot, and it worries her. Eph, far below in Manhattan, believes the darkness is what the end of the world will one day look like. He heads into the Medical Examiner’s office.

At JFK, loved ones of the deceased do paperwork. Nora believes she sees a shadow leave the hangar. Lorena Ruiz, meanwhile, believes the dead airplane and the eclipse equal no good. Lorena is drawn to the garbage dumpsters and a small plot of land by the hurricane fence. She finds the black coffin-like box there. A short time later, a legion of cats finds her body with its head crushed. Meanwhile, Abraham Setrakian shakes his head sadly at the news that there are four survivors. He believes his best chance will be with Ephraim Goodweather. Meanwhile, Palmer arrives at the Stoneheart Group in Manhattan. As occultation ends, 270 people, 93 of them children, watch the return of sunlight without proper eye protection. They become permanently blind.

Awakening

Eph returns to the Regis Air Maintenance Hangar. Nora greets him. The plane is still being investigated. Twenty hours later, there is still nothing to go on. On the plane, Eph and Nora smell phosphorous. Using Luma lights, which emit a light similar to black light, they see the outlines of where passengers have been. They see the substance splattered everywhere. It appears to have come from the OFCRA –the overhead flight crew rest area. They find the same mess upstairs. In addition to the smell of ammonia, they smell earthworms. They discover pieces of rich, dark earth on the carpet –like the soil in the coffin. But, upon searching, they cannot find the cabinet. Upon examining surveillance footage, they see the coffin there one moment, and it's gone the next. There is a black blur past the camera. They believe someone was hiding in the overhead area. Wherever the coffin is, so is the individual.





A man named Gus is given fifty dollars by a stranger to drive a van from the airport parking garage to Manhattan and park it. He is given five-hundred more for completing the assignment. Yet, he is also informed that his criminal past and his mother's address are known. Gus wonders what is on the inside of the van, especially after he hears banging. He rushes away and calls his buddy Felix to hurry up and come get him.

Back at the isolation wing of Jamaica Hospital Medical Center, Eph and Nora are angered to learn that three of the four survivors, under legal protection from Bolivar's lawyer and assistance from Luss, have left the hospital. Only Redfern remains. He looks very old and tired. Redfern has been wracking his brain trying to remember the landing. Redfern has no idea about the large, black box. They notice a scar on Redfern's neck. Redfern does mention that he remembers dreaming about a black human-like creature that terrorized his dreams from childhood. He called the creature Mr. Leech. Abraham Setrakian, meanwhile, always dreams about seeing the Sardu in the concentration camps, feeding on various prisoners. Abraham knows he has to stop the Sardu.

### Movement

Ansel Barbour smuggles his wife and kids in their Flatbush, New York, home. Ansel is the computer programmer. His wife Ann-Marie believes that he is still alive for a reason –for her. Ansel doesn't feel quite right, but he knows that he can't go back to the hospital to miss work,. He feels snapping and crackling in his neck and spine. He finds himself wanting the bloody, marinating meat in the fridge.

Gossett Bennett, medical examiner, meets with Eph and Nora. All of the bodies he has examined have a similar scar on their necks. There is no blood in the bodies, but there is a white, engine-oil like substance. The body temperatures are elevated. On his way out to the custody hearing, Eph is stopped by Abraham Setrakian. Nora joins them. He asks about the coffin. He urges them to destroy it, but he is horrified to learn that they do not know the location of the body. He urges them to cremate the bodies before nightfall. The police show up to escort Abraham away, for he tried to get in to view the bodies earlier. Abraham tells Eph and Nora to go over the bodies with ultraviolet light, and to destroy them. Eph misses the custody appointment. Custody is given to his mother, with visitation rights to Eph. Eph cries.

### The First Night

Dr. Bennett finishes up his day at the Medical Examiner's Office. He has collected a jar of the opalescent white fluid from one of the corpses, noticing it moves on its own, rippling. He finds a thin, whitish worm, and believes he has discovered a parasite. He accidentally loses it down the drain. Then, he goes to get another sample from another body. Joan Luss, meanwhile, has traveled to her weekend home in New Canaan, Connecticut. She believes she has the flu and that her nerves are shot. She believes the incident on the airline will lead to money, fame, and a partnership in the law firm. Her husband Roger, who is in finance, is in Singapore. Neeva, the nanny for the children, tells Joan she doesn't look so good. Neeva makes her some soup. Joan sends the children, Keene and Audrey, out of the room with promises of ponies and ponds.



Officer Karn and Officer Lup respond to a call about a naked dead man near the Queens Midtown Tunnel exits. Two more calls come in for a naked man outside United Nations headquarters. Bolivar, meanwhile, returns to his new home in Manhattan. He brings home three girls from the club. As they go in, he stumbles, feeling pain in his side. He wonders if someone has drugged him, as it has happened before. He begins hearing voices. In his bedroom, Bolivar and the girls prepare to have sex, but he begins biting and sucking on one girl's neck without realizing it. This causes her and the other two girls to scream. He screams at the girls to get out. He goes to the bathroom to cool his face with cold water and sees that his pupils have gone completely black. At the same time, Augustin "Gus" Elizadle still continues wondering about the van. He and Felix see a naked, fat man run past at Seventh and Broadway. Gus tries to tackle the man, but the man throws him off. The man turns on Felix and bites into his neck. Gus knocks the fat man down, and Felix holds his own neck. Gus and the fat man fight. The fat man falls into traffic where his head is crushed. Gus is terrified to see him bleeding not red, but white. The police arrive and cuff Gus.

Gary Gilberton helps himself to whiskey following news of his daughter Emma's death on board the 777. She was the youngest passenger to die. His dearly beloved wife Berwyn is also dead from the flight, but it is his daughter he cannot get past. Yet, he is stunned when Emma shows up at the door. She looks sad and lost. He wonders how it is possible. He sees she has cuts and scratches on her body, and he gives her a bath and puts her to bed. He cannot sleep. Emma comes into his room and opens her mouth toward him. That night, Zack is saddened with the knowledge that his family can never be a family again. Zack sees a naked man walking around in the street below him. The man locks eyes with him, and Zack dives under his blankets because the man looks hungry. Ansel, meanwhile, wanders around his house, pulling at his hair, trying to figure out what is wrong with him. Ann-Marie takes the kids for a walk. He kills his dog Gertie while they are out and drains her blood. He then kills their dog Pap in the same way. His family then returns, and he runs out of the house.

Analysis of Redfern reveals some sort of sub-level of skin. Redfern, having been given enough sedatives to knock out two men, is still somehow awake. Redfern becomes terrified, saying Mr. Leech has arrived. Nora and Eph confer. Nora reveals the substance in the plane is plasma, like bird excretions. Eph wonders about the old man, Abraham Setrakian. He then learns Redfern is missing. Jim Kent, looking for Redfern, is ambushed by him. Nora finds Jim unconscious and reclining against the wall. Redfern is standing over him, blood dripping out of his mouth. Redfern lunges at her as she tries to pick up a phone from the wall. He grabs her. Eph appears a moment later and tackles Redfern. Redfern chases him into another room, where Redfern attempts to use a stinger-like appendage from his mouth to hit Eph. Eph bases Redfern in the face with a fire extinguisher, cracking his spine, and toppling Redfern to the floor. Reddish worms spew out of his neck, and Nora and Eph go to see Jim.

It is 1943. Abraham Setrakian sees that the Sardu, Dark Thing, comes to his barracks twice a week to feed. Setrakian knows that the creature must have its origins in an old, local Roman crypt. He attempts to confront it, but the creature breaks his hands. The creature has intentions of killing him, only to be chased off by the light of dawn. As



Abraham is later about to be executed by a Nazi officer, a rebellion in the camp occurs. Setrakian, along with others, makes his escape.

## Analysis

Between the chapters “Occultation” and “The First Night,” the reader learns incredibly important information about Setrakian and the attack on the plane. It seems that New York is dealing with vampires and a strain of vampire disease that rapidly converts the infected. Setrakian has dealt with the Master vampire before, while he was in a concentration camp. He is aware that Josuf Sardu has taken on the form of a vampire. While Setrakian attempts to vanquish evil by confronting and killing Josuf Sardu, he is almost killed. Setrakian narrowly manages to escape. Setrakian is very aware of the dangers. Though Eph is very intelligent, he is still coming around to accepting the truth of the situation.

Eph is startled by his brief encounter with Setrakian, who seems to know much more about what is going on than anyone else should –especially when it comes to using an ultraviolet light to detect substances not visible to the human eye in regular light. Other strange things are beginning to happen as well, including the return of dead passengers to their homes, as well as the white substance that now courses through the veins of the dead. But, the final proof for Eph comes in the assault of Jim Kent and then Nora by Redfern. Redfern must be fought off with a fire extinguisher, being subdued only upon having his skull crushed. The fact that Redfern has a retractable stinger that seeks blood from living people only underscores the point to Eph that he is no longer dealing with something he can dismiss as fantasy or imagination.

## Discussion Question 1

What evidence do Eph and Nora come across which causes them to realize that they are not dealing with something normal?

## Discussion Question 2

Why did Setrakian fail in his 1943 attempt to kill Sardu?

## Discussion Question 3

How does Eph come to realize that Setrakian is not just a crazy, old man?

## Vocabulary

Adjacent, sojourn, haggard, inconsequential, superstitious, aghast, emulated, inured.



# Dawn - Exposure

## Summary

Dawn - Exposure

Dawn

Abraham Setrakian tries to get comfortable in the jail at the 17th Precinct on East Fifty-First in Manhattan. He is desperate to get out and do something to help. He reflects on Gus being brought in the night before, talking about a dead man bleeding white. He knows that Strigoi –the plague –has begun. Jim Kent is put in isolation at Jamaica Hospital Medical Center. He says he feels fine. Eph and Nora tell Jim it is for his own safety. Eph and Nora cut open Redfern and see his insides are covered with black masses, spindly feeders and veins, and shriveled organs. They are horrified. They then meet with Barnes and chief medical examiner for New York, Dr. Julius Mirnstein. Mirnstein reveals the overnight staff has vanished. The forty-some corpses are also gone. Eph shows them images of Redfern's body and innards. They believe that whatever is plaguing Redfern and the others is transmissible. They advise quarantining the other three people. Barnes agrees to begin the process. It is then that the body of the man fighting with Gus is wheeled in. Eph and Nora look at it and see it as similar to Redfern. They decide to go and find Abraham Setrakian. At the 17th Precinct, Setrakian and Gus talk. Gus knows Setrakian from the pawn shop. He reveals the man Gus fought was a dead man possessed by a disease. He also says that Felix is changing. Abraham tells Gus to kill Felix before Felix kills Gus. The police then bring Gus and Felix out.

At the Stoneheart Group in Manhattan, Palmer directs Fitzwilliam to dispatch a team to the Jamaica Medical Center, and to ignore all future calls from Jim Kent because Kent says he has a touch of something. Ann-Marie, meanwhile, has locked up her house. She is stunned and terrified at what Ansel has done to the dogs. She has been keeping him locked up in the shed out back. When she goes to see him, Ansel lunges out at her. He looks like a demon. She locks him back up. Bolivar goes to see his personal physician. Dr. Box is perplexed by Bolivar's condition. He believes it is a form of cancer. Bolivar then shows Dr. Box his penis, which is blackened and shriveled. Meanwhile, Neeva has taken the Luss children into her own care. She goes to their city home in Bronxville and discovers something horrifying in the basement, along with dirt stains on the carpet. She runs screaming out of the house, begging her daughter Sebastiane to drive. At the 17th Precinct, Eph and Nora meet with Setrakian. Eph pretends to be Setrakian's son in order to have him released. Setrakian tells Eph they must begin at once.

The Old Professor



Eph, Nora, and Setrakian go to Setrakian's shop, Knickerbocker Loans and Curios, at East 118th Street in Spanish Harlem. Abraham Setrakian says he has had experience with what is going on now. He has seen it in Budapest, in Basra, Prague, outside Paris, along the Yellow River, in Mongolia, and in places in North America as well. In its early stages, it is dismissed as a fluke, as rabies, or as schizophrenia. He leads them to a room full of old battle armor and weapons of various types, explaining the pawn business allowed him to come into contact with history. He explains he is a former professor of Eastern European Literature and Folklore at the University of Vienna. Disgraced, he came to America. He explains the disease is that of the vampire. Originally, there were seven. Three remained in the Old World; three came to the New. They have long remained in hiding. The problem is the seventh Master. He is a rogue, who has turned his back on both factions. They are of the Earth, and like to sleep in the earth—such as a coffin with soil. Setrakian shows them a heart he cut out of a young girl outside Shkoder, in northern Albania, in 1971. The heart, preserved in a jar, is beating. Inside the heart is a thin, pale worm a few inches in length. It infects the host and reproduces. The worm colonizes and adapts the host body for survival. Setrakian explains that the Masters traditionally kill those they feed on to prevent the spread of the virus. Setrakian feeds the worm a few drops of blood every few days, to keep it alive. Setrakian reveals that the Master that has traveled aboard the plane must also have a human ally. Within two months, the world could end and the human race could be extinct.

Vasiliy Fet, of the Bureau of Pest Control Services in New York City, arrives outside of Park Place in Tribeca on a call for pest extermination. Billy, the owner of the apartment, says his daughter woke up with a rat gnawing on her face. Vasiliy finds the rat, kills it, and heads out. Out in the alleyway, he finds more rats. They appear to be feeding in the garbage dumpster. Such mass exoduses for rats only occur after events like 9/11, major construction, or earthquakes. He is able to trace them to a construction site. At Jamaica Bay, Eph and Setrakian go to see Jim Kent. As they approach, the sedated Jim Kent's vitals increase, sensing blood. Setrakian has Eph look at Jim using an old, silver-backed mirror. Eph sees that Jim's reflection is a blur. Setrakian explains that it takes one day and one night to activate for feeding, then seven days for a full transformation. It takes thirty days for total maturity. Since there is a compact digestive system, any undigested food is expelled for fresh feeding—the substance found all over the plane. Jim awakens and knows Setrakian, as he is part of a hive of creatures, all tying back to the Master. Jim's pupils are blackened.

In Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn, newly-widowed Glory Mueller sees a news story about missing bodies from the plane. She remembers a dream from the night before, about her husband, Hermann, coming back to her. It terrifies her. She has endured thirteen years of abuse, along with their sons, at Hermann's hands. She hears sounds in her attic, and believes it to be raccoons. She goes up with a Machete knife. She discovers Hermann sleeping in her attic. He opens his eyes and looks at her, and something clicks inside her head. She hacks him apart, and throws up, stunned that he is bleeding white and not red. Then she feels bug-like sensations along her skin, and feels something in her rectum, and crawling under her skin.



Eph, Nora, and Setrakian drive east on the Cross Island Expressway into Nassau County. All of the passengers have gone home, Setrakian explains, to hide, feed, and nest. It is like the animal impulse that guides dogs home. They go to the Gilbarton residence, but no one answers. Setrakian leads the way with a short-wave UVC light, which destroys germs. It is harmful to humans, but deadly to vampires. They break in and discover Emma's father, dead and turning. Emma enters, and they trap her. Setrakian kills the rising father and the girl with a silver blade. In the spilled white blood, worms wiggle around. Setrakian kills them with the light. They are all aware that the second wave of infection is beginning as the two-hundred passengers from the plane begin to feed.

### The Second Night

Patricia, neighbor of the Lusses, waits for her husband Mark to get home. She is curious about the Lusses' nanny leaving the house, screaming. She is startled to find Joan cradling her baby Jacqueline, who is bleeding from the neck. Ann-Marie Barbour, meanwhile, has no idea how to handle her husband Ansel. He is burying himself under dirt during the day, and he looks at her with a hungry gaze. He is weak and unable to attempt to break out anymore. Mr. Otish, the neighbor who has been complaining about the sounds from the shed, lectures Ann-Marie on how to properly care for dogs. She takes him to the shed and shuts him in. Mark, meanwhile, gets home to find his wife Patricia and kids all gone. He sees movement across the street at the Lusses, and goes to see. Inside, he finds a strange array of different people, who descend on him to feed. Neeva, nanny of the Lusses, has a Haitian heritage of Roman Catholicism and voodoo. She knows Joan Luss has succumbed to evil, which is why she had taken the children away. She barricades her apartment. She fills a water gun with Holy Water. She sprays a hand that reaches through her mail slot, with no effect. Two glowing, red eyes look inside.

Rudy Wain, Gabriel Bolivar's manager, goes to see him. Bolivar's skin is darkened, his eyes red. Bolivar then feeds on Wain. Nine year-old Jeanie Millsome is on her way home with her mother after seeing "The Little Mermaid" on Broadway. On the subway home, the Master feeds on her.

### Exposure

It is now the third morning following the arrival of Flight 753. Eph brings Etrakian to the office headquarters of the CDC Canary Project (which investigates biological threats) in Chelsea. Everett Barnes is there with an FBI agent. They want to know the location of the bodies from the morgue. Footage from the scene seems to show the struggle as an act of aggression on Eph's part. Eph says that they can't see clearly who is in the video. Setrakian rushes out, but he is pursued by two cops. Everett explains that he simply cannot believe Eph's wild claims, especially given the video. He also believes they have injected something into Jim Kent. As they go downstairs, they discover that Setrakian has handcuffed both cops together. Setrakian advances on the group with his sword, and the FBI agents put up their hands. Eph tells Everett he is just doing his job. Over at





the Stoneheart Group in Manhattan, Eldritch Palmer watches the news. Palmer receives a call, telling him that Eph escaped with help from an old man with a sword cane.

At his pawn shop, Setrakian explains to Eph and Nora that the strain passes most easily through an orderly society, rather than an alert society. They must now act on their own, Setrakian explains. Sunlight, he contends, is their most powerful weapon. The creatures go into the darkness during the day to escape the sun, not necessarily to sleep. Eph gets a call from Pete O'Connell in Atlanta, who has put in some time on samples sent to him by Eph. He reveals it is a viral strain of genetic acid. He tells Pete to save the findings but destroy the sample. He says he will explain when he can. He is terrified now that he sent the substance out of New York. He sees a news story on television naming him as a person of interest. Setrakian begins to form a strategy. Vampires cannot cross water without assistance. Most of New York is surrounded by water. Bridges will have to be destroyed or shut down, which can delay the Master. However, to destroy the strain, the Master must be destroyed.

At the World Trade Center site on Liberty Street, Vasiliy Fet investigates the rat origins. He is told the rats have lessened recently. He goes through the underground tunnels, feeling reverence for the victims of the terrorist attacks on 9/11. He sees glowing eyes down one tunnel. He comes across three workers, but they don't know anything about anyone else being down in the tunnels. He puts down tracking powder. Outside, he sees a poster for two sandhog workers who are missing.

Following his escape from the concentration camp, Abraham Setrakian goes looking for the Roman ruins. He finds them, and he knows that the lair of Sardu is below. Instead of finding the creature, he finds a German officer named Dieter Zimmer, who is exceptionally cruel. Setrakian battles Zimmer and drags him outside to die. Setrakian screams out in the air, pouring out his anguished soul, from all the horrors he has faced to the thought that God has abandoned him. He decides to spend his life finding and hunting down these creatures.

## Analysis

There is no one better for Eph to have come across or teamed up with than Setrakian. Setrakian has dedicated his life to fighting the Rogue Master Sardu. He is fully aware of what defeating the evil creature will take. Yet, even though Eph and Nora have gone through enough to know that evil is afoot, they are having a difficult time accepting it. Setrakian knows this is because there is a difference between the Old and New Worlds. Everything from the relationship of Americans with God to how they view modernity, medicine, and technology, are in disagreement with the views of the Old World.

As Eph, Nora, and Setrakian are preparing for the coming fight with the Old Master, the novel begins to follow a seemingly unrelated story –that of city rat catcher Vasiliy Fet. Though he is able to handle any kind of pest control, the appearance of a deluge of rats clearly piques his interest. He decides to investigate why so many rats have been flooding New York. Meanwhile, Setrakian reveals that the disease doesn't have to



spread beyond New York City so long as the city is quarantined. Yet, at the same time, powerful forces begin working against Eph, seeking to defeat him. Setrakian's enemies know that Eph is now in league with Setrakian. Eph is now wanted by the FBI, the NYPD, and the CDC.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Why is Eph targeted by the FBI and the NYPD for arrest?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Why has Setrakian devoted his life to hunting down and destroying vampires?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Why does Eph regret sending the sample of white substance to Pete O'Connell? Why is Eph so insistent that Pete destroy the sample?

## **Vocabulary**

Supposition, subsequent, transmissible, quarantining, communicable, insidious, affinity, immunological, incursion, invective, apocalyptic, banal, philosophy, genocide, subjugation, abstractions, insinuated, revenant, corporeal, effulgent.





# Replication - The Clan

## Summary

Replication - The Clan

Replication

Eph, Nora, and Setrakian manage to gain access to Jamaica Hospital to see Jim Kent. They see Jim's girlfriend, Sylvia, there as well. Nora distracts her, while Eph and Setrakian discover that Jim is gone. Eph swaps his cell phone for Jim's. In the back of a prisoner transport van, Gus looks at Felix. Felix begins feeding on one of the prisoners. When the guards look through an open partition, Felix begins feeding on the driver. The van swerves and crashes, and Gus jumps out. One of the cops attempts to shoot Felix, but Felix descends on him. Gus rushes away. Gus realizes that his friend is a vampire. He kills the police officers so they will not turn.

Kelly is horrified by the news stories about Eph. Matt believes it is a ploy by Eph to impress Kelly. She is stunned when Eph shows up at the house. He asks Zach to borrow his camera. Meanwhile, Setrakian explains to Nora that his wife died seventeen years before and he never had any children. He reveals his past with the camp at Treblinka. He also explains the Master has taken the form of Jusef Sardu, a Polish nobleman who went missing on a hunting expedition in 1873. The walking stick and sword carried by Setrakian are those of Sardu. He found Sardu's journal from the hunting expedition as well. It recounts picking off members of the hunting party one by one. The final entry details Sardu's determination to go and confront the creature. His return to the village later revealed him to no longer need to rely on the cane. The village was abandoned shortly thereafter. Kelly later apologizes to Eph for the entire divorce. She says that she needed to get out. Eph tells Kelly to take Zack and Matt to her parents' place in Vermont and wait there for news.

On Vestry Street in Tribeca, Eldritch Palmer sits relaxing on a rooftop. He reflects on how the people of the city have no idea what is coming. The Master's presence descends on the rooftop. Palmer welcomes the Master to New York. Palmer wants to know why the Master left four alive; the Master tells him not to question. Palmer speaks about Doctor Ephraim Goodweather and his aged companion. The Master remembers meeting them once many years before. He is also confused as to why the Master would have chosen Bolivar. Palmer reflects angrily on having to deal with Abraham Setrakian to find the Master in the first place. Palmer gives the Master a sheet of information on Eph. Inside gunfire is heard. and Palmer tells the Master that they had a deal. The Master responds that a deal lasts only so long as it suits him. Fitzwilliam comes rushing outside, chased by vampires.

Kelly urges Zack and Matt to pack quickly. Matt argues that Eph is only trying to get into Kelly's head. Matt refuses to go because he has to work. She decides to pack for Matt



anyway. Over in Bronxville, Roger Luss enjoys an evening at the Siwanoy Country Club before headed home after his trip. He notices the club is relatively deserted. He takes a taxi home, hearing a scream along the way. He goes inside the house to get cash for the driver, and discovers the place is a wreck. He tries calling 911, but gets only a recording. He hears something else in the house, and tries to get out. He jumps into the taxi, and he and the driver are surrounded by vampires. The driver tries shooting a revolver, but to no avail. Roger rushes off down the street, pursued by innumerable former neighbors, friends, and acquaintances.

Eph, Nora, and Setrakian go to the Barbour residence in Flatbush. They wonder why there were survivors. Eph wonders if they were some kind of distraction. They find a Bible with Revelations 11:7-8 underlined in red, speaking of a beast ascending from the pit to conquer and kill in a great city which is allegorically known as Sodom. Nora finds Ann-Marie dead upstairs, having slit her wrists. She has left a note detailing the safety of the children. They hear guttural moaning in the shed out back, and find Ansel, chained up. They realize he has chained himself up, but has been kept by the wife. Setrakian beheads Ansel. They light the shed on fire and leave.

Matt, who works at Sears as a manager, goes on break in the mall. He finds a guard, bloody and in pain, and calls in on the man's radio to the guard's supervisor. As the supervisor responds, saying he is coming, screams come in over the radio. The guard drags himself to Sears and locks himself in as two men close in on Matt. Eph, Nora, and Setrakian arrive at Tribeca, at the Bolivar residence. Setrakian cautions against breaking in, choosing instead to seek out more information about the building.

### Daylight

Vasiliy Fet goes to a house in Bushwick, Brooklyn, not far from where he has grown up, to handle two old buildings owned by the bank. He finds the property manager, apparently dead. Vasiliy is attacked by a girl in her teens, most likely a crackhead, he believes. Another comes down the stairs. As he pulls back curtains, the girl burns up and dies, and the man coming down the stairs goes back up. Vasiliy kills the second man by going after him, and bringing in more sunlight.

Palmer meets with members of the Stoneheart Society, in an old industrial warehouse. Two people, who resemble Nora and Eph, have kidnapped Jim Kent and are keeping him in a Kurt pod. Kent has been starved into petrification. Palmer orders Kent destroyed, and his body is pushed into an incinerator. The news carries reports of mass disappearances, and the Medical Examiner's office being boarded up due to a supposed gas leak. Eph calls Director Barnes from a payphone at Pennsylvania Station. Barnes is still grasping at skepticism, though he is coming closer to understanding, but Eph tells him what they need are soldiers going house to house and killing the creatures. He tells Barnes to quarantine the city. Barnes says he doesn't have that kind of authority yet. Eph also discovers that Jim Kent was calling someone at the Stoneheart Group, which Setrakian knows is headed up by Eldritch Palmer. Palmer was also seeking out Sardu, Setrakian reveals, but for a very different reason. Vasiliy Fet then calls Jim's phone, seeking Eph, and tells him to come to Bushwick. On the way,



Eph tries to see Palmer, but is told that Palmer is not available for meetings without appointments, and then Eph sees a sialysis machine being packed up and carted away, and knows Palmer is looking to leave the city. Setrakian believes that Palmer sought to bring the Master to America in exchange for immortality. Setrakian, who has done research, reveals that Bolivar's building is connected to the New York City subways by tunnels, from the days of Prohibition. Sylvia allows Eph, Nora, and Setrakian to go through Jim's things. Sylvia makes a call and tells Eph that they are going to lose.

At PS 69 in Jackson Heights, Kelly berates herself for not leaving the city, and worries that Matt did not come home the previous evening. She receives a message on her cell phone that says, "Come home." In Bushwick, Vasiliy shows Eph, Nora, and Setrakian four dead rats, all from the underground. Something has disturbed them, he explains. Then he shows them the two dead bodies. He also tells them he believes he knows where the rats are coming from. With Vasiliy's credentials, they get into the underground below the World Trade Center site. They find Vasiliy's tracking powder has been disturbed by a large number of shoes and bare feet, and they find a pile of cell phones in a corner. They decide to leave and prepare to come back.

Lair

Eph goes to his apartment. He finds two dead policemen in the kitchen. The door slams shut behind him. Bolivar and an unknown vampire are there. Eph then comes face to face with Sardu. As the Master prepares to feed on Eph, he senses Setrakian. Vasiliy battles one vampire, while Nora battles Bolivar. Setrakian draws his sword, and the Master escapes with Bolivar. Setrakian beheads the other vampire. Eph tells Vasiliy, Setrakian, and Nora, that the Master has Kelly. At Kelly's house, Eph is horrified to see the suitcases packed, but not taken. He realizes that the Master does indeed have Kelly and Zack. A vampiric Matt appears to do battle with Eph, who stabs Matt repeatedly in the throat with a knife. It is at that moment that Zack gets home from his buddy Fred's house because Kelly never came to pick him up. Eph hugs his son and explains what happened. At Setrakian's, Eph, Nora, and Vasiliy prepare to fight. Among the weapons include a nailgun with silver nails. Eph asks Nora to remain behind with Zack in case things go wrong.

Gus has been on the run since the night before. He goes to see his mom, but finds his brother there, turned. He kills his brother. His mother has been turned, but he does not kill her. As he goes to leave, vampires try to stop him. He races away from them, intent on going to see Setrakian. He comes across a group of vampire hunters, using crossbows. But they are not vampire hunters at all, as Gus is taken prisoner. The World Trade Center Site location, Setrakian explains, is because the Master is drawn to places of suffering, and that, combined with the labyrinth of tunnels underneath the city, makes the location perfect. They head to the old City Hall station, closed down after World War II. They battle vampires as they reach the station and continue toward the area beneath the WTC Site. They find the coffin, but the Master has escaped. They do not have time to destroy the coffin. So, they overturn it and spill the soil all over the ground.



Eph, Vasiliy, and Setrakian head to Bolivar's town house. Setrakian's heart appears to be troubling him. Nevertheless, he faces down the Master and begins shattering the glass windows, allowing sunlight to flood the building. He and Eph and Vasiliy force the Master back toward the stairs, intending to force him up onto the roof. They finally corner the Master; but, as they do, Setrakian's heart falters. Light is let into the room. The Master is cornered, but Setrakian is on the floor, the sword nearby. Eph gives Setrakian one of the nitroglycerine tablets the old man carries and charges the Master with the sword, knocking him outside. The Master rushes off the roof into the shadows of the day.

### The Clan

Three Ancient Masters of the New World confer in an undiscovered asbestos mine deep below Nazareth, Pennsylvania. They are aware of the Seventh Master's actions. They will give him the war he wants. Someone is then brought to the Masters. It is Gus. They say that he will be their sun hunter.

## Analysis

As the novel draws to a close, there are some dramatic events which prove to be both a blessing and a curse to Eph and the others. First, they discover that with a concerted effort and the proper weapons they can indeed defeat and destroy the infected. They are able to directly challenge and confront the Master and his minions, both in the underground and in Bolivar's apartment. While the Master is not defeated, the fight between Setrakian, Eph, Vasiliy, and him demonstrates that he is not unbeatable. Therefore, there is hope. Yet, Setrakian is also suffering his own malady. He is troubled by a bad heart. It is something that requires proper medical attention, but the state of the city and the wanted status of Eph and the others make treatment out of the question.

What is even more unnerving is the meeting of the Masters of the New World beneath Nazareth, Pennsylvania. They are fully aware that the Seventh Master is attempting to begin a war. So, they are going to give him such a war. They are also prepared to initiate Gus as their sun hunter. What makes the situation so much more personal to Eph, in a way that it is not personal to the Masters, is that the Rogue Master has kidnapped Kelly. It is clear to the reader that Eph still has some sort of residual feelings for Kelly. Setrakian's faith and moral make the situation personal to him, too. He has encountered evil his entire life.

## Discussion Question 1

Why does the Master kidnap Kelly?



## Discussion Question 2

What does the battle with the Master demonstrate to Eph, Setrakian, and Vasily? Do they all agree on what the outcome means? Justify your answer with details.

## Discussion Question 3

Why does Palmer track down and find the Rogue Master?

## Vocabulary

Miraculously, delusions, emaciated, mundanity, servility, protracted, peripherally, impious, allegorically, jaundiced, petrification, pellucid, preternatural, bedraggled, burgeoning, immolation.



# Epilogue

## Summary

### Epilogue

Eph, Vasiliy, Setrakian, Nora, and Zack regroup at Kelly's house. Setrakian is recovering, slowly. He believes that they are witnessing the end of humankind. Zack helps Eph upload footage of Ansel Barbour in the shed for all of the online world to see. Kelly appears at the house, but she has been turned. Zack blacks out from terror. Kelly looks at her son –her intended victim –and flees as Vasiliy raises a silver sword. Eph knows the custody battle is far from over. He then pours himself a drink.

## Analysis

As the novel closes, Eph, Vasiliy, Nora, Zack, and Setrakian are all recovering. Reflecting on what Setrakian had said about an alert society being more difficult to subdue than an orderly and unaware society, Zack and Eph upload a video of Ansel Barbour to the internet. Setrakian, however, takes a more pessimistic view when it comes to the way that things have turned out. He believes that humankind is facing certain destruction, though he clearly is not resolved to giving up on trying to stop the evil that threatens man. The future is uncertain.

## Discussion Question 1

What is the terror and sadness of the arrival of Kelly back at her house? What does Eph believe this means?

## Discussion Question 2

Why is Setrakian so pessimistic about the future of mankind? Is he correct in this assertion? Why or why not?

## Discussion Question 3

Why do Zack and Eph post a video of Ansel Barbour online for the world to see?

## Vocabulary

Evolution, brandished, extinction, insidious.



# Characters

## Gus

Augustin “Gus” Elizalde is a less-than-reputable petty criminal from the streets of New York who is abducted by vampires working for the Masters of the New World. He will become their sun hunter.

## Jim Kent

Jim Kent is a member of the Canary Project for the CDC. He works under Eph. Jim is a traitor, an inside man for Eldritch Palmer. Ultimately, he becomes the victim of the vampire world himself. He is incinerated on Palmer’s orders.

## Kelly Goodweather

Kelly Goodweather is the ex-wife of Eph and the mother of Zack. She divorces Abraham before the novel begins, though she still has some kind of feelings for Eph. She is dating a man named Matt, who lives with her. She ignores Eph’s warnings to leave New York. She is ultimately kidnapped and turned into a vampire by the Master.

## Vasiliy Fet

Vasiliy Fet is a New York City pest exterminator. As an American citizen whose parents are Russian, he is a mixture of New and Old ways. He discovers a mass exodus of rats from beneath the streets of New York. He helps Eph and Setrakian to locate the lair of the Master as the cause of this exodus. Vasiliy readily joins the team Setrakian has put together in order to combat the Master and his coven.

## Gabriel Bolivar

Gabriel Bolivar is a famous musician with a home in New York and a scandalous lifestyle. He is selected by the Master to serve as his guide across the Atlantic to New York. He is thus one of the four survivors of the Master’s initial attack on board Flight 753.

## Nora Martinez

Nora Martinez is the biochemist for the Canary Project, and serves as a friend and confidante to Eph Goodweather. Nora joins Eph, Setrakian, and Vasiliy in their efforts to



avert disaster at the hands of the vampires. When the Master's lair is assaulted by Eph and the others, she is asked to stay behind to protect Zack, which she does.

## Zack Goodweather

Zack Goodweather is the son of Eph and Kelly Goodweather. He is unhappy that his parents are divorced and longs to spend more time with his father. Zack soon realizes that the 777 incident means the undead have turned up on the streets of New York. He helps his father to upload evidence of vampires to the internet, to alert the world about their presence.

## The Rogue Master

As one of the original seven vampires, the Rogue Master comes from the Old World. He has a falling out with the other six over some unknown reason, and he goes rogue. He has possessed the body of Polish nobleman Josuf Sardu since 1873. He has been spotted around the world, including by Abraham Setrakian, who confronts the Rogue Master at the concentration camp at which Setrakian is imprisoned. The Master is sought out and aided by Eldritch Palmer in exchange for Palmer's immortality.

## Abraham Setrakian

Abraham Setrakian is a former college professor and current owner of Knickerbocker Pawn Shop in East Harlem, New York. A survivor of the Holocaust, Setrakian is a native of Poland. He first learns about vampires from his grandmother. Setrakian encounters Jusef Sardu, the Rogue Master of the Old World, at a concentration camp. He tries to defeat him. Setrakian devotes his life to destroying vampires, traveling worldwide to do so. Despite his age and his heart condition, Setrakian is a courageous and incredibly strong individual. He helps teach and guide Eph and the others into confronting and seeking to defeat the Master.

## Eph Goodweather

Ephraim "Eph" Goodweather is head of the Canary Project for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Incredibly intelligent, he is the ex-husband of Kelly and the father of Zack. He is called, along with his teammates Nora and Jim, to investigate the 777 that lands at JFK. At first, he believes the passengers are victims of some new kind of biological terrorist attack. He later comes to accept that they are victims of a parasitic, viral strain of a vampire disease after being attacked by a changed Captain Redfern and meeting Abraham Setrakian. Eph and Nora end up working with Setrakian and Vasiliy Fet. They hope to save New York by rooting out and destroying the Rogue Master. Eph is unable to kill the Master, but he learns that not all is lost. At the end of the story, he and Zack upload a video of Ansel Barbour to the internet to alert the world as to the plague that is coming.





# Symbols and Symbolism

## Silver Cane Sword

A silver cane sword is originally carried by Jusef Sardu in Poland in 1873 to help him get around. Its handle is that of a wolf's head. Following his possession by the vampire's disease, Sardu no longer relies on the cane. Setrakian tracks down and buys the cane, ultimately using it as a weapon in his own war against vampires.

## Nitroglycerine Pills

Nitroglycerine pills are carried around by Abraham Setrakian and taken for his weak heart. When he suffers an attack during the final confrontation with the Master, Eph gives Setrakian one of the pills, which allows Setrakian to survive.

## Silver

Silver is a pure, precious metal. It is the greatest weakness of vampires. Setrakian has amassed an armory of silver bullets, nails, knives, blades, and various weapons to be used in combat against the vampires.

## Silver-Backed Mirror

An old, silver-backed mirror is carried around by Setrakian and used to prove who is and who is not a vampire by virtue of whether or not the individual has a reflection. New mirrors do not have silver backing. They cannot prove if someone is or is not a vampire.

## Video Camera

A video camera is used by Eph to film footage of Ansel Barbour in his shed. Eph hopes to prove to the world that a plague of vampires has descended on New York.



# Settings

## New York

New York is the primary setting for the novel *The Strain* by Guillermo Del Toro and Chuck Hogan. New York City is located in the lower part of New York State, between upstate New York and Long Island. It is the location of John F. Kennedy International Airport. It is where Manhattan, as well as Bolivar's townhouse, are located. New York becomes the primary battleground in the war which Eph, Setrakian, Vasiliy, Nora, and Zack wage against the forces of the Rogue Master.

## Poland

Poland is the homeland of Abraham Setrakian and Jusef Sardu. It is where Sardu becomes infected and turned into a vampire in 1873, and where Setrakian suffers in a concentration camp. Poland is also where Setrakian first encounters Sardu, and attempts to defeat him.

## Berlin

Berlin is the capital of Germany. It is the origin of Flight 753. It is also where the Old Master boarded the plane to invade New York.

## Manhattan

Manhattan is located in New York City. It is one of the five boroughs. Manhattan is where the World Trade Center Site is located, along with the Master's lair. It is where Eph, Setrakian, and Vasiliy first go to confront the Rogue Master once they know what they are dealing with and are properly armed.

## Bolivar's Townhouse

Located in New York, Bolivar's townhouse is where the famous musician Gabriel Bolivar lives. It is where the Rogue Master flees to by using the underground tunnels built by bootleggers from beneath the World Trade Center Site.

# Themes and Motifs

## Suspense

Suspense is a major theme and motif in the novel *The Strain* by Guillermo Del Toro and Chuck Hogan. Suspense involves apprehension, fear, and anxiety about a situation that is either unfolding or has yet to unfold. Del Toro and Hogan use suspense throughout the novel as a way to provoke fear, excitement, and interest in their plot.

Suspense is most notably apparent initially with the arrival of Flight 753 from Berlin to JFK International Airport. Something on the plane goes terribly wrong in a time span of about two or three minutes. The plane goes dead, and all the shutters are drawn. These events lead the reader to wonder about what could be going on with the plane. The fact that employees (such as Lo Ruiz) and people (like Abraham Setrakian) have an interest in what is happening to the aircraft adds to the air of suspense around the darkened plane. As each clue comes to light, suspense deepens. Eph and Nora attempt to figure out what went wrong on the plane. Then, the discovery of the large, black coffin full of soil on board the plane adds to the plot.

Suspense is also utilized to great effect during each of the succeeding nights, as the disappearance of sunlight leads to the appearance of vampires. Those who are not turned face the danger of being attacked, killed, and possessed by these vampires that are on the loose. Quite often, victims are totally unaware of their loved ones having turned. One such victim is Emma Gilbarton's father. Emma's appearance at his bedside to consume him is terrifying. Then, Mr. Otish complains about what he believes to be Ann-Marie's dog in the shed. He is drawn toward the shed. The reader knows what is within; Otish does not. He becomes food for Ansel. The greatest use of suspense toward the end of the novel involves the kidnapping of Kelly. Eph and the others fear what has become of her, only to learn in the very end that she has been turned.

## Good and Evil

The battle between good and evil is a major theme in the novel *The Strain* by Guillermo Del Toro and Chuck Hogan. The battle between good and evil occurs usually as the forces of evil attempt to conquer, subdue, or subjugate part or all of the world for nefarious and dark purposes. This evil is often opposed by good and may be undermined, aided directly or indirectly, or opposed directly or indirectly, by the morally ambivalent.

The forces of evil in the novel are represented by the Rogue Master, by Eldritch Palmer, and by the coven the Old Master amasses to his cause. The Rogue Master is one of the original Seven Masters, but has had a falling out with them. He intends to start a war. Palmer has sought out the Rogue Master, bringing him to America in exchange for immortality.



In the novel, Eph, Nora, Vasiliy, Zack, and Setrakian represent the forces of good, as they seek to combat the Rogue Master. Setrakian's entire life has been about vanquishing evil, specifically, the vampire strain. His belief in God and goodness lead to his opposition of evil. It is Setrakian who enlists the others into the same service to defeat and destroy the Rogue Master.

The Masters of the New World, three of the original Seven Masters, meet beneath Nazareth, Pennsylvania, and provide something of an ambivalent force that will either ultimately hinder or help the Rogue Master, though the intention by the Three is to go to war with the Rogue. They may come to help the Rogue if they also seek to war against Setrakian's faction; however, they may align themselves with Setrakian, though this remains to be unseen since they want to tackle things on their own through Gus.

## The Old World and the New World

A clash between the Old World and the New World is an underlying theme found consistently throughout *The Strain*. The New World –America –and the Old –Europe – have had different experiences with their relationships with everything from God and religion to science and technology. It is best summed up by Setrakian, (Chapter: "The Old Professor," paragraph 58): "You simplify because you cannot believe... Because you are a doctor, a man of science, and because this is America –where everything is known and understood, and God is a benevolent dictator, and the future must always be bright."

Both the Old World and the New World have been through war, pain, suffering, and similar experiences, though the Old World has gone through far more centuries of such struggle. Despite the progress of both worlds, however, the Old World has adopted a more pessimistic view of the future, while the New is optimistic and hopeful. God is seen to have abandoned the Old World. God is seen to walk with the New World. Science and technology mean that God's world can be understood in every single way, shape and form. In the Old World, certain sorts of mystery and the unexplained persists in ways that it does not in the New World. One such belief, through Setrakian, is a belief in things like vampires.

Setrakian and Vasiliy provide something of a bridge between the Old World and the New World. Setrakian believes God has abandoned him, but he will go on fighting evil anyways. He and Vasiliy have a healthy respect for the mystery and darkness of the Old World, including when it seeps into the New World. As such, they bring Old World knowledge to bear in the New World against Old World problems –which can easily affect the New.

# Styles

## Point of View

Guillermo Del Toro and Chuck Hogan tell their novel *The Strain* from the third-person, limited-omniscient perspective. This is done for at least two primary reasons. The first is that the wide array of characters, events, and places make a third-person narrator necessary to offer the reader a sense of unity between the components. The narrator provides a single strand that unites each of these different points in the plot. The second reason is to provide more groundwork for suspense, by keeping the reader in the dark about many different parts of the plot with the limited-omniscient mode. Events unfold to the characters and to the reader at the same time.

## Language and Meaning

Guillermo Del Toro and Chuck Hogan tell their novel *The Strain* in language that is brief, simple, and straightforward. This is done for at least two primary reasons. First, the story is filled with suspense and horror, so language that is romantic, poetic, or dense would not be suitable to the plot. The second reason is that the events of the novel are fast-paced and occur within a matter of a few days. The brief, simple, and straightforward language therefore helps to add a sense of urgency and speed to the plot.

## Structure

Guillermo Del Toro and Chuck Hogan divide their novel *The Strain* into seventeen unnumbered, but titled chapters, including an epilogue. Each chapter revolves around a certain set of events. For example, "The First Night" deals with the first night of the vampire plague and the efforts of Eph and others to survive. "The Old Professor" deals with much of the history and knowledge brought to bear by Setrakian. The simple and straightforward structure to the plot also allows the reader to focus on the plot, rather than on the structure of the novel, allowing for an added urgency and speed to the plot.



## Quotes

What can go wrong that fast?

-- Narrator (The Landing paragraph 34)

**Importance:** Lo Ruiz, the first person sent out to see Flight 753 after landing and losing contact, feels scared and unnerved by the aircraft. This revelation by the narrator demonstrates just how quickly something went wrong between landing and losing contact with the plane.

She had never been out in the middle part of the country, where you can see tornadoes coming at you from miles away. But this felt like that. Like there was something coming her way that she could do nothing about.

-- Narrator (Now Boarding paragraph 75)

**Importance:** The growing sense of unease and the ominous dread felt by many in the novel following news of Flight 753 is best expressed by Kelly through the narrator. She knows that something is coming. She also knows that it cannot be stopped -at least for her. This will serve to be a premonition of sorts for herself.

This is what the beginning of the end of the world will look like, he thought to himself before returning to the M.E.'s office to assist in the cataloging of the dead.

-- Narrator (Occultation paragraph 54)

**Importance:** Eph is reflecting on the solar eclipse occurring. He is also looking at what might be the end of the world. His thoughts are more relevant and timely than he realizes. It is plausible that the end of the world has come as the forces of darkness rise up in the city.

He knew what he knew. The only thing wrong with him now was that he was being driven mad by desperation.

-- Narrator (Dawn paragraph 4)

**Importance:** Despite what the police and others think of Setrakian, Setrakian knows that he is not mad. He is fully aware of the dangers the city faces, even if the city itself does not yet understand. It is maddening that Setrakian is currently powerless to do anything about it.

You simplify because you cannot believe... Because you are a doctor, a man of science, and because this is America –where everything is known and understood, and God is a benevolent dictator, and the future must always be bright.

-- Setrakian (The Old Professor paragraph 58)

**Importance:** Setrakian is speaking to Eph and Nora about their inability to fully accept the reality of the situation. Setrakian underscores the difference between the Old World and the New, in everything from their relationships with God to their outlook on the



future and modernity. Darkness is coming, no matter how bright the future seems, he asserts.

This is the job you hired me to do, Everett. To sound the alarm when a public health crisis warrants. We are on the verge of a worldwide pandemic. An extinction event. And somebody somewhere is pulling out all the stops to make damn sure it succeeds.

-- Eph (Exposure paragraph 62)

**Importance:** Eph butts heads with his boss Everett over handling the vampire threat. He explains that he is doing his job to warn people. Even when Eph is targeted by law enforcement, he refuses to give up. He will do whatever he can to avoid extinction. Yet, he is also aware that powerful forces are actively working against him because someone is as determined to see him fail as he is to succeed.

Every mundanity of life grows infinitely more precious in the face of impending death.

-- Narrator (Replication paragraph 194)

**Importance:** The narrator, revealing Eldritch Palmer's thoughts, utters an unenviable truth about life. It is full of a thousand simple, little things taken for granted or taken as annoyances. However, when life becomes short, those simple things become precious because every moment matters.

These vampires –and that’s what they are, Everett –they are viruses incarnate, and they are going to burn through this city until there are none of us left.

-- Eph (Daylight paragraph 58)

**Importance:** Having fully accepted what faces the city, Eph is resolved to alert anyone and everyone. He will do everything he can to stop the spread of the vampires. He knows that the vampires, too, will stop at nothing. They will burn through people left and right until the city -and beyond- falls.

Their custody battle for Zack was not over.

-- Narrator (Epilogue paragraph 55)

**Importance:** Having struggled with Kelly for custody of Zack early on in the novel, Eph realizes that the custody battle for Zack is not over. This is the case because Kelly has been turned by the Master. Now, she will stop at nothing to get at Zack as she follows the Master's orders.