Written by Tony Timpone
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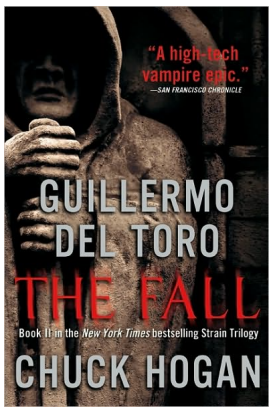
*Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan’s THE FALL (Book II in the authors’ STRAIN trilogy) debuted last week and already has fanboys clamoring for more, due to del Toro’s dedicated cinematic following and the huge international success of the series’ first installment in 2009 (it sold to 27 foreign publishers). THE STRAIN trilogy details the apocalyptic battle between man and vampire, and vampire vs. vampire, as a bloodsucker virus spreads around the globe, decimating humanity and rocking civilization to its core. You can find out more about THE STRAIN h ere . In Part One of FANGORIA’s exclusive interview, dark imagineer del Toro talks about Book II, his collaborative process with Hogan (pictured) and the grim places THE FALL explores.*




**FANGORIA:** Where does THE FALL begin?

**GUILLERMO DEL TORO:** When I first talked to Chuck about the three books, we always knew what the map was, and we wanted to go through one book, then figure out the second, then figure out the third. There’s a map to it, but it was very distorted from the beginning. We knew THE FALL was going to be the darkest book where everybody and everything has gone to shit, everybody is hopeless. But at the same time, you see [our heroes] are really good fighters and have a strong nucleus of resistance. This is the most eccentric change of pace from the first book, because we have all the beats in the first book but sort of enhanced. For example, we bring in the Jersey Sapphires, who are a bunch of gangbangers, crazy characters who become hunters, and we have a masked Mexican wrestler. But all of this is done without any hint of postmodern winking, there’s no condescendence to the characters. My favorite character in the book is Angel, the masked wrestler. I’ve been trying to write that character for two decades, and finally it came through. So THE FALL is truly the deepest, darkest moment in the trilogy.

**FANG:** Was there anything else you and Chuck Hogan did differently with Book II?

**DEL TORO:** Yeah. With the second book we knew each other much better. We were able to compartmentalize even more; we rewrite each other, and we editorialize each other, but I was able to stake some claims and say, “I want this section,” and he would say, “I want this other section.” And we would generate the pages separately, and then change it. So it was more fluid. I surprised him with the masked Mexican wrestler [laughs], he was not expecting it, and he surprised me. We used to open the book with a chapter I wrote originally, a subway incident with the mole people. Then that was moved later, and Chuck and I agreed on another beginning, so it’s a constant flow. The book changed a lot in the course, but the mapping remained the same.

**FANG:** Things get really grim in THE FALL, as the virus spreads around the world and the threat of nuclear annihilation looms. What made you decide to go so dark this time?

**DEL TORO:** What’s always said is that, in fiction, in order for the audience to know you’re not bluffing, you come out and execute a hostage; it’s truly terror tactics. We needed to show that the stakes were that big, and I think that the third book, which is going to be the thickest one, is gonna be the toughest one to write. It will be dealing with the origins of the Master, and what happens. I’m writing up some stuff right now, and I’m having such a perverse joy [laughs], rounding up all the fancy people in Manhattan, marching them into the charnel houses and it will be quite brutal in the beginning. There is a dystopian joy in creating those things. Chuck and I agreed that we needed that passage of night in order to even have the slightest hope in the third one.

**FANG:** Was it tough killing off some of the series’ beloved characters in THE FALL? What do you have against the human race in this one?

**DEL TORO:** Actually, what’s funny is that when I finished the first book with Chuck, we spoke about that [significance of the title]. The strain of Eph’s marriage splitting apart, the strain of the

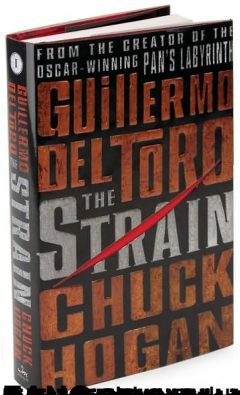
city in crisis and the viral strain… THE FALL, in the yearly calendar, literally happens in the fall. It’s the fall of mankind, it’s the fall of our main hero, because Eph literally takes a turn for the worse. It is really where mankind is brought to its knees by the Master. And THE NIGHT ETERNAL is the postapocalyptic epic of the three books.

**FANG:** THE FALL has some amazing setpieces, much like a big action film: derailed train, the siege on the underground vampires, New York City burning, etc. Are you considering adapting the trilogy into a movie?

**DEL TORO:** We’ve been very careful; we’ve been approached since the first one. When the first book hit the top 10 New York Times bestseller list, we immediately started to get phone calls. And we said no to everything, because we want to finish the book in peace. But I’m very happy; two out of the three scenes you’ve mentioned are scenes that I generated and sketched first, very action driven, very cinematic—the derailment and the subway accident. Chuck wrote New York burning, and he wrote one of my favorite scenes, which is the dinner between Eph and Eldritch Palmer. We tried to bring a sense of cinematic action to the book. An easy criticism would be, “It reads like a screenplay.” Whoever says that has never read a screenplay, much less written one. Chuck and I made a deal to not do introspection on the characters that much. There are faint moments of them having an inner-monologue, but we mainly define them by action, which is a cinematic trick. You define the characters by what they do, how they interact with each other, and that makes the book a little more fast paced, but it also makes it harder to get to know the characters if you’re not paying close attention.

**FANG:** Eph is definitely coming unhinged in THE FALL.

**DEL TORO:** It was something we talked about, because this character starts as a hero, then becomes Taxi Driver! And I promised on the first book, that characters you dislike you’re going to end up admiring at the end of the trilogy, and characters you love you’re going to end up feeling sorry for or ambivalent about. It’s an arc that I like. I did it on DEVIL’S BACKBONE, where we start with a bully who you hate, and in the middle of the movie, you’re loving him, and he becomes one of the main characters. And it’s the same in the trilogy. The third book is gonna go into an unexpected place, I guarantee that.


FROM THE CREATOR OF THE
OSCAR-WINNING PAN'S LABYRINTH
GUILLERMO
DEL TORO
THE
STRAIN
CHUCK
HOGAN

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