

THE GOLEM'S
MIGHTY SWING
BY JAMES STURM

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DRAWN & QUARTERLY

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The work of baseball historian Donald Honig, cartoonist Ray Gotto,
and the Shonen Champion manga were valuable reference
in the production of *The Golem's Mighty Swing*.

Thank you Rachel, for everything.

In loving memory of Judith Dane.



THE GOLEM'S MIGHTY SWING: AN INTRODUCTION

by Gene Luen Yang

I bought a copy of James Sturm's *The Golem's Mighty Swing* in 2001, right when it was first published. I found it at an alternative comics convention. Back then, any comic book that didn't have capes or tights was automatically labeled alternative. A graphic novel about a Jewish baseball team in the 1920s? That was about as alternative as alternative got.

I finished *The Golem's Mighty Swing* in one sitting. Then I read it again. And again.

In a lecture that he gave a few years later, James described the comics medium as the intersection of poetry and graphic design. That's exactly what I encountered on those pages—a master poet and a master graphic designer melded into one cartoonist.

Sixteen years have passed, and the American comic book industry couldn't

be more different. The *New York Times's* graphic books bestseller list, which didn't even exist in 2001, is dominated by stories about pretty much everything but capes and tights. A graphic novel about a Jewish baseball team in the 1920s no longer seems as alternative as it once did.

James Sturm played a huge role in these developments, not only as a cartoonist but also as a teacher. In addition to *The Golem's Mighty Swing*, he's written and drawn a number of beautifully-crafted graphic novels, including *Satchel Paige*, *Striking Out Jim Crow* and *Market Day*. He also founded The Center for Cartoon Studies, the nation's premiere comics-centric college.

The American comic book industry is very different. America is very different, too.

Today, America is in the throes of an identity crisis. Many Americans (as well

as those who share the planet with Americans) are questioning the very soul of our country. Who are we, exactly? What do we stand for? And where are we going?

In times like this, it is helpful to be reminded of who we used to be, what we once stood for, and where we've been. And that is why *The Golem's Mighty Swing* is more timely now than when it was first released.

James shows us what America wishes it had been, and what America actually was. By rubbing the rose tint from our memories, he uncovers our nation's truest self.

We might want American history—and especially American sports history—to be a tidy collection of fables with easy-to-grasp morals. What we actually find is grittier and muddier, but perhaps still hopeful.

The America James reveals is the huckster who buys your culture from you, polishes off the rough spots, and sells it for a profit. America is the town loon who staggers through the streets warning of the doom that the strangers will bring.

But America is also the outsider who stands at the entrance of a cage, dressed in a ludicrous costume, ready to defend to the death a group of teammates who don't look anything like him.

America is a destroyer. But America is also our companion and our protector.

America is the golem.

—GENE LUEN YANG

Author of *American Born Chinese* and
The Shadow Hero

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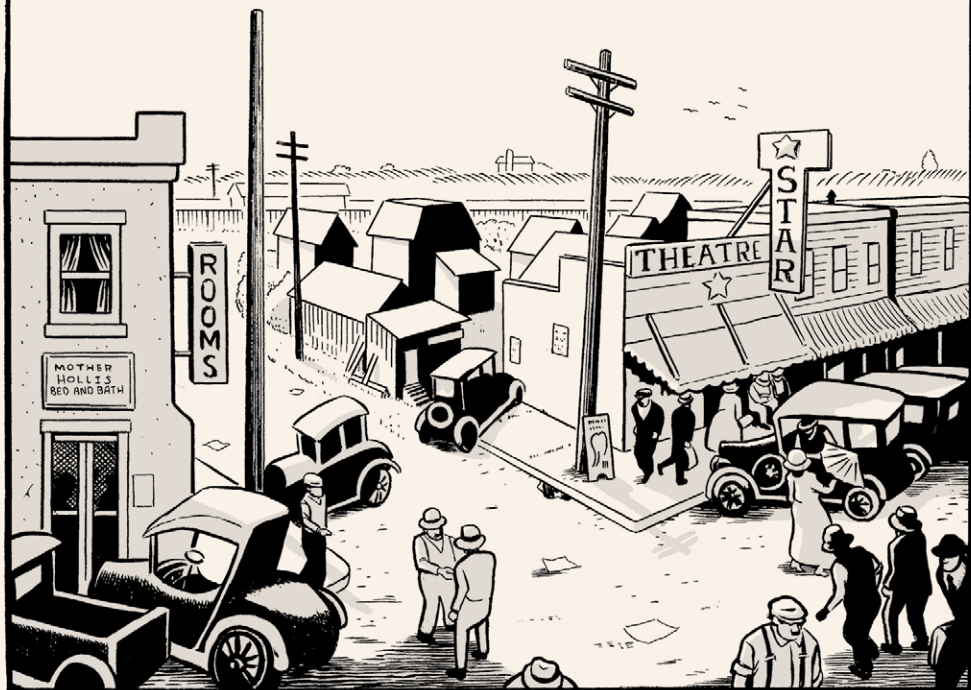
A REAL
PARK PACKING
ATTRACTION

RESERVED SEATING FOR WHITES



Formerly of the Boston Red Sox
Noah Strauss "The Zion Lion"

I am Noah Strauss, the Zion Lion. I am the manager and third baseman for the Stars of David Baseball Club. In the past fourteen days my team has played twenty games in six different states. As the summer wears on I can hardly distinguish one town from the next.



This is by no means a complaint. Had I stayed in New York I'd be a pushcart peddler or worse (like my father, a sweatshop tailor).





My father would be gravely disappointed knowing we are playing on the Sabbath.
He will always be a greenhorn. His imagination lives in the old country.
Mine lives in America and baseball is America.

