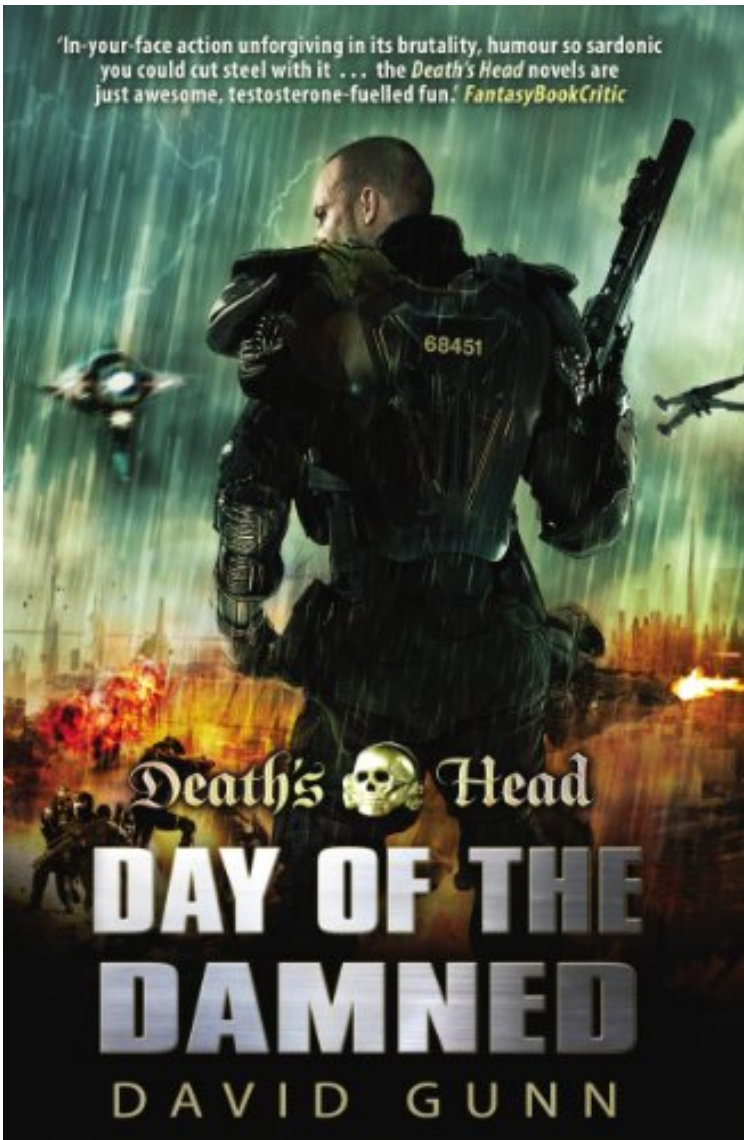


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Death's Head: Day Of The Damned: (Death's Head Book 3)



Par David Gunn

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurLieutenant Sven Tveskoeg is in disgrace. His victory on Hekati, and the emperor's favour, have turned his patron against him: General Indigo Jaxx wants Sven dead. Exiled to Wildeside, Sven waits for Jaxx's assassin. He hunts, he fieldstrips his weapons, he tries not to mind. At the age of 28, he's lived longer than he expected anyway. But then Sven finds himself offering to save the life of Jaxx's son. This means returning to Farlight, where he finds that the emperor is missing, his empire is collapsing, there are murderous riots in the capital and General Jaxx stands on the edge of ruin. All Sven has to do is nothing.

But when has he ever done anything that sensible...The devil-may-care, not quite 100% human, mercenary soldier/killing machine known as Lieutenant Sven Tveskoeg and his like-minded team, the Aux, are back in a third explosive, non-stop action-filled adventure.ExtraitChapter OneThe lizards mistake is to move. The moment it swaps granite for red dirt and the temptation of food, its dead. Because my blade hisses through the air to open its spine from skull to tail.Its a small lizard.All the big ones are eaten.Picking it up with metal fingers, I hold it over the fire until its flesh crisps and the skin peels. The man I offer to share with doesnt want to. So I bite off its head, chewing happily.Sven, Anton says. Thats disgusting.Its not disgusting at all. Its hot and salty from the grass and the saline bugs filling its stomach. Believe me, Ive tasted worse.He only does it to annoy you, says a voice.My sidearm has been sulking since we landed yesterday. It wants battle. It wants slaughter. It wants glory and another chip upgrade. The SIGs got a wolf hunt instead. Pulling the gun from my holster, I toggle it into silence.Can I look? Anton asks.He takes the SIG-37 carefully. The piece has that effect on people. Full-AI sidearms are rare. Not to mention illegal. Pretty, he says, handing it back. Not sure thats the word Id use . . .yeah, i know, Anton says. Never ask a man if hes legion. Hell tell you if he is. If not, theres no need to embarrass him.In my case telling people is compulsory. Thats because I was once busted back from sergeant, and the law wants troublemakers identified early, particularly dangerous ones.Were near the edge of the rift, hidden in scrub.A fire burns behind us. Dry kindling and dry wood so it makes no smoke. A freshly killed rabbit roasts above it. The spit is made from thorn, and I trapped the animal two minutes ago. Antons hungry and still refusing to eat lizard.You know, he says. Its good to see you.Im waiting for the but.But we thought . . .OctoV suggested it, I say, cutting him short. And a suggestion from our glorious leader . . .So the general had no option?None.Anton is shocked. As well he might be. Im here on leave at OctoVs suggestion. The idea that our glorious leader should bother with the welfare of a junior lieutenant, even a useful one, is so absurd Im wondering about his real reasons. So is Anton, from the look of things.Its strange, he says. How little Debro and I know about you.Whats to know? Im a Deaths Head lieutenant.Thats it?Before that, a prisoner on Paradise.And before that, he says. The Legion Etranger . . . Sven. Thats not really an answer.Sounds like one to me.He tells me most people, if you ask them who they are, they tell you about their family or their childhood, where they grew up, what they wanted to be. Come on, he says. What is your earliest memory? Debro was wondering.Killing a dog. Im five, maybe six. The dog is bigger than me. But old and toothless. The dog has only one canine. I have a brick.I win.Before I can drag the dog into hiding, older boys take it.One of them uses the brick I used on the dog. When I wake, theyre gone and so is my food for the week. The smell of meat leads me to their fire. From their surprise, they dont expect me to get up again. But I mend fast. How much faster than others I dont know back then.And I fight dirty.Kicking embers at one, I knee another between his legs. Hes old enough for it to matter. A third turns to run and I kill him with my brick. They should have taken it with them.No one argues when I go through the dead boys pack and take his blade.The dog is too hot to carry. So I use my new knife to cut free a half-cooked leg and spend the next two days throwing my guts up.Anton wishes he hadnt asked. You know, he says. Maybe you shouldnt tell Debro after all . . .Three hours to darkness. To be honest, Id rather be here on my own. But its his hunt. Im only here because Debro, his ex-wife, thinks Ill keep him safe. Although the sour smile on their daughters face when we leave says she believes the opposite.Something wrong?Why?Anton glances at me. Hes been doing that lately. Mostly when he thinks Im not looking. Youre grinding your teeth.Thinking about Apt.Thats Lady Aptitude Tezuka Wildeside, all of sixteen.He decides teeth grinding makes sense.people keep to themselves in the high plains. Few families live here by choice. Most have fled debts or are running from conscription in the army of our glorious emperor. A few like Anton are in exile.Some are in hiding . . .Im on extended leave. Its the same thing.The ground is hard, the grass sparse. Water is rare as hens teeth. Sixty miles from where we sit it pisses oil instead of rain. A pall of smoke hangs to our north and drifts from the roiling flames that rise from the rift floor. A hundred fires, a thousand fires. No one knows or cares. The rift is just somewhere to avoid if you have sense.A geofarming malfunction, Debro says.No idea what that means.There is a deadly beauty to the hills around us. The heat will bake you, and the cloudless nights freeze your flesh to your bones. False paths wait to tip you down ravines. Sour water poisons those who drink unwisely. And thats before the snakes, wild dogs, and mountain cats. And wolves.Anton is an ex-captain of the palace guard, ex-husband to Senator Debro Wildeside, one of the richest women in the empire, and an ex- inmate on Paradise, a prison planet on the other edge of the spiral arm.Me, Im ex-legion.Think I might have mentioned that.Hes told Debro were here to shoot a rogue wolf.I know better. Anton wants to talk. Youd think, out in the desert, that he was trying to avoid the spies of our glorious leader. But because our glorious leader hears everything, I assume he wants to avoid being

heard by Debro. Anton grins when I say this. Youve changed. Adaptive, I tell him. Thats me. His eyes widen. Adaptive isnt a word I use. Said so in my last psyche report. The one they shredded? Yeah, that one. So, I ask, whats this about? The last time Anton and I talked was Paradise. I was keeping him and Debro alive. Times change. I get the feeling hes trying to repay his debt. Sven, he says. If you need money . . . I dont. Anton sighs. We know youre in trouble. That is one way of putting it. Dig two friends out of prison. Blow up an enemy mother ship. Protect some snot-nosed colonel from his own stupidity. Get my general promoted. Win praises from our glorious leader. And end up with a list of enemies longer than I can count, starting with General Jaxx himself. Welcome to the Octovian Empire. Anton wont let me shake off his thanks. That tells me how things have changed. In prison Id simply punch him into silence. Now were on his ex-wifes land, with his buggy parked behind us, and he owns the hunting rifle Im using. Its a beauty, too. Perfect balance, a custom stock and a telescopic sight so perfect that looking through it feels like being there. The round is 7.62, full metal jacket. Antons old-fashioned like that. We couldnt believe it, he says. He hesitates. No, the man corrects himself. I couldnt believe it. Debro always said youd come through. But when the guards arrived . . . Memory chokes his voice. Leave it. Being freed isnt the first thing on anybodys mind when the guards turn up. Being taken for questioning. Being shot. But freed? Time to change the conversation. You really think a wolfs out there? Anton squints toward the goat weve tethered to a post. The animal has sunk into an exhausted silence. Its tugs against the rope are weaker than they were an hour ago. Yes, he says. Then well give it another five minutes. After that? We go looking. His laugh is a bark. Believe you would. Whats to believe? Temperatures dropping and nights coming in. There are tacos and cold beers waiting for us at Wildeside. The sooner the wolf is dead, the sooner I get a drink. Sven . . . Seems I wont have to go looking after all. The wolf is huge. Grizzled and gray around its muzzle. Its also limping and has a gash on its haunches that looks fresh. As it crests a boulder, the beast stops to look back. Neck out, head held awkwardly. Clear shot, Anton says. I can see that. Hell, Ive rarely had an easier target. The animals backlit by twilight. My line of sight is clear. And the animal so close the scope is a luxury. So what stops me? That gut feeling I get before shit goes bad. Sven . . . Not yet. Anton scowls, but he ...Revue de presse"More carnage than the entire 'Rambo' series combined...hard-hitting and difficult to shake off...it leaves you thinking and, in its own perverse way, hungry for even more." (SFX)