



Knee-Deep in the Dead

Dafydd ab Hugh , Brad Linaweaver

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The Gates were there on Phobos when mankind first arrived. Inert, unyielding, impossibly alien constructs, for twenty years they sat lifeless, mute testaments to their long-vanished creators, their secrets hidden. Then one day, they sprang to life... Meet Corporal Flynn Taggart, United States Marine Corps; serial number 888-23-9912. He's the best warrior the twenty-first century has to offer, which is a damn good thing. Because Flynn Taggart is all that's standing between the hell that just dropped in on Mars and an unsuspecting planet Earth...

Knee-Deep in the Dead Details

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From Reader Review Knee-Deep in the Dead for online ebook

Joshua Shioshita says

Woah. There have been few times in my life I've actually thought to myself I might not be able to make it all the way through a book. This was one of those times, and this book was brutal. They say in horror, the best strategy is letting the audience's imagination take over, hint don't show, and that's why that image of Leatherface slamming the metal door shut in that old Texas house is so terrifying. They do that in this book too...I guess. They essentially leave everything to the imagination, so if you haven't played the game (recently) you have no idea what anything is supposed to look like or what's going on. It's all just "generic wall" this, "generic gun" that, "generic demon" there; "we walked this way and did this thing and then the chapter ended." The other unfortunate fact is that we're stuck in the head of a narrator who apparently is a 13-year-old boy in middle school. Now I don't know why they would let a 13-year-old boy into the space marines, but apparently they did. Let's just say, whenever he encountered a "pumpkin", I was rooting for the gourd. Sigh. I like the Doom games, but this book is a perfect argument for why trying to literally translate the mechanics of a video game to other media is a stupid idea.

Cait says

The chief amusement of this book was that it made me nostalgic for all of that time that I wasted as a teenager playing the game on which this book is based -- but hey, it was an awesome game, so, y'know, I enjoyed reading this a lot.

It wasn't The DOOM Comic of yore (comic reading link, youtube dramatic reading), of course, which is and always will be the DOOM adaptation against which all others must be compared, and I think that where it missed most of its mark was that, unlike the comic, the book tried to take the "oh noes, demons are invading our space station" concept in a semi-realistic way -- which meant that this was basically the novelization of the protagonist's trauma and mental breakdown mashed awkwardly with the demands of the plot that the protagonist blow a lot of demons the fuck up. These things *can* mesh instead of mush -- see, for example, *Alien* -- but this book seems a little too self-conscious of its genre conventions to really get you into the head of the protagonist where you need to be to make that work, at least if you're me. (I will grant that most of that self-consciousness was probably necessary for the nit-fixing of the original game elements for semi-coherent world-building.)

Speaking of the protagonist, though: a lot of this book was the sensitive exploration of the feelings of the protagonist (a Marine named Fly, short for Flynn) for a fellow Marine named Arlene, who appears in person about halfway through the book. When Arlene isn't present, she's a kickass Marine who runs through the station well ahead of Fly, killing things, blazing the trail, and making Fly generally feel second-best; he spends his time day-dreaming about what great friends they were and how all of the Marines respected her so much. When she appears, Fly immediately goes into macho protect-the-little-lady mode, which the book obliges by setting Arlene up to be rescued a couple of times. And, of course, it's Arlene who's all we-must-rescue-the-homeworld in order to inspire Fly to do his part in the fighting. I think that the story of Arlene and her sidekick Fly would have made a much better book, especially because any concept of "chain of command" was pretty much blown out of the water from page one, so it wouldn't matter that Fly technically outranked her.

Or maybe I just need to go digging through my old backups to see if I have a copy of DOOM which can be installed on a modern computer so that I can blow up a few demons of my own....

Dark-Draco says

Flynn Taggart is a Marine, threatened with court martial until the Gates on Mars suddenly start working. Aliens that resemble our very human ideas of demons, plus a few zombies thrown in for good measure, take over the base, leaving Flynn on his own. Following marks that he hopes are left by his mate, Arlene, he travels down the levels of the base, the monsters getting worse and harder to kill, the scenery changing at each doorway, and challenges to solve before he can move on.

This was an interesting read in that the author has tried really hard to reproduce the experience of playing the game. However, that means it loses a bit of coherence, as there isn't really much of a story line.....just lists of creatures that Flynn kills. Because it is written in 1st person narrative, you also know that Flynn is going to survive, which makes the danger seem less urgent. Not that the other characters are safe!

Overall, a good read that doesn't need brain in gear to enjoy or think about...looking forward to the next one to see how they get out of the base.

Ethan says

Action packed, funny, and full of character. Absolutely better than it had any right to be. More people should read this book, seriously.

Sebastian Sajda says

I turn the corner and shoot the demon with my shotgun. Then I find some more ammo. Then I open a door. Then I teleport to the next area... ad nauseam.

Perry Gough says

Was in a Doom mood after playing Doom VFR and couldn't find any more books like the non-fiction book about the creation of Doom so thought I would pick up a tie-in Novel.

Honestly I was not expecting much going in with this, I just needed something I could come in and out of due to long hours at work and this was a very easy read.

It sort of follows the story of Doom but when I say sort of it's not really what you think. Doom the game really has no story Your a nameless Marine on Mars where Hell has broke loose that's all the story there is too it.

The book you can kind of see what they are trying to do but although it succeeds with being a no brainier

sci-fi action horror title but it fails in a lot of other areas.

A lot of the names for the creatures are wrong such as Barons of Hell now being Princes Of Hell & Imps being Demons. They underuse the shotgun and also the book contains more of a survival horror aspects at time with things like stealth being introduced which isn't Doom.

My main gripe with this book however is the main character Doom Guy is now a guy nicknamed Fly? The character although an action hero is more human then he should be, Doom Guy is a fearless, emotionless machine but this book gives him moments where he is scared and even a love interest? It does kind of ruin the aura of Doom Guy who is a character so brutal that Hell itself is terrified of him. This book makes him cheesy and corny just like a lot of the Demons.

Overall I got about what I was expecting out of this a light easy read that to be honest did some aspects of Doom like the action well but it was doomed to be a average book from the start. What makes Doom one of the best games of all time is that it's no nonsense there is little to no plot and the main character is more robotic then human. This books takes away a lot of what makes Doom great by existing as a book. Too me they should have done the story without Doom Guy and then maybe it might have worked.

Read from the Makers of Doom instead if you need a Doom related book.

Frank says

This review is being written over 15 years after the fact. The boy who read this book and loved doom, has grown up, but still this book is remembered fondly.

The big thing about this book, is unlike the scholastic series of Video game books, this is written as if it was a real book, that only owes a theme from the game, and it comes off surprisingly good. It's not high end fiction, it's not pop fiction, this is a novelization of a video game that takes a good amount of liberties to keep it interesting.

If you have ever played Doom there's not much there for a book, but the book success in making the travel more than mindless shooter. The only negative is there's a romance story that feels like the author felt it was necessary. Sadly I don't think it added much to the book, but overall the book is well written enough to avoid getting too bogged down there.

Again, for a video game novelization, it's quite well done, but not something I'd brag to people about reading.

Dustin says

Two and a half stars, but I'm feeling generous so I'll round up in this case.

I'll admit I'm surprised. Going in I expected this to be absolutely terrible. It's a novel based on an early 90's first person shooter that I found in the dollar bin of a local book store. Turns out it wasn't bad.

Now, it's exactly what you'd expect in terms of story. You follow a SPACE MARINE as he fights his way

through hell on Mars (well, since it's based on the original *Doom*, above Mars, but whatever), trying to locate his best Marine pal and stop the invasion. It's all first person (a nice meta-joke by the author) and the author did a decent job with the material, though it's a bit obvious that he was required to keep the book PG-13 instead of R.

At around page 200 or so I was starting to get action fatigue, but by that point I pushed on to the cliffhanger ending.

If you liked the games or books light on plot and heavy on action then pick this up.

Nicholas Diak says

With the upcoming *Doom* reboot on the horizon to be released, this is an opportune time to take a look at the novelizations of the original *Doom* games. Four books were jointly penned by Dafydd ab Hugh and Brad Linaweafer in the mid-90s: *Knee-Deep in the Dead*, *Hell on Earth*, *Infernal Sky*, and *Endgame*. This review is for the first book in the quadrilogy, *Knee Deep in the Dead*.

Knee-Deep in the Dead is an adaption of the first game in the *Doom* series, and attempts to cover the events from the game's three episodes, "Knee-Deep in the Dead," "The Shores of Hell," and "Inferno." The adaption is a muddled mix of verbatim content from the game, severely altered content from the game, and both authors' own embellishments. The first-person perspective story focuses on Fly Taggart, a marine that negotiates the bases on both moons of Mars - Phobos and Deimos - in an attempt to halt an alien invasion. Aliens have been pouring through gates on these installations, turning humans into zombies and perverting the architecture with grotesque displays.

At an extreme surface level, the overall "gist" of the *Doom* games are transferred to text surprisingly well. The original source material only had the barest of plot to support the game, and this threadbare plot is conveyed in *Knee-Deep in the Dead* accurately. Beyond this observation, the book quickly crumbles apart due to sub-par writing, juvenileness, and weird results from trying to adapt the first-person shooter nature of the game into textual form.

The writing jointly done by ab Hugh and Linaweafer alternates between average and inconsistent. The gunfights and action sequences start off elaborate, but in the latter half of the book degenerates into Fly lamenting that the gunfights are so monotonous that they can be glossed over in description, which he subsequently does. The relationship between Fly and Arlene, another marine, is a considerable pain point of the story. Fly alternates between lust and wanting to maintain Arlene as "his buddy" through the book. Before meeting up with Arlene, Fly's thoughts of her became increasingly unnerving and singular to the point of obsession. He cares not for any other companion in his unit – dead or alive – he solely focuses on finding Arlene and no one else.

When partnered up, the dialog between Fly and Arlene, and Fly's internal thoughts in regards to her, highlight the juvenileness of the story. Instead of treating each other with respect and as serious comrades at arms, the dialog and actions between the both of them are akin to how fourth graders view each other. Relationships aside, the book is severely presented in a PG or PG-13 format, despite the source material being some of the most graphic and controversial material at the time. The characters don't swear and descriptions of gore, blood and dismemberment are generic and sterile. A climatic scene of Arlene wielding a chainsaw to combat a few demons should have been written with *Evil Dead* visceralness in mind, but instead it is dumbed down to simply limbs being sawed off.

The occult and demonic themes are whitewashed over and instead presented as aliens attempting to project humans fears back at them. It is a more convoluted explanation than the simpler monsters from hell version from the source material. Fans of the game will find this alteration incredulous while non-fan will simply find it too farfetched and executed poorly. What is considered actual Hell in the video game is considered what the aliens (not demons) think hell would look like.

There are moments in the book that the authors try to integrate situations and locals from the game verbatim into the book. Exact descriptions of rooms with specific patterns of darkness or locations of elevators are peppered through the book, which can be a good or bad thing. *Doom* fans may recognize the scenes and cheer while non-fans will be jarred by the random instances of very specific nuanced writing that is not consistently used to describe other locations in the book.

Regardless of the poor writing, the inconsistency of what the book is trying to juggle from the original game, and lackluster characters, the writing is still written fast paced and satisfies the B-grade action/horror cravings a reader may desire. The book is written to be accessible and it probably on par with other novelizations of video games. Novelization of a video game probably presents different challenges when compared to novelizations of a film or TV series, so credit where it's due to ab Hugh and Linaweafer for giving it a shot. In the end, *Knee-Deep in the Dead* is fun, perhaps more due to a *Plan 9* incompetence more than anything, and really would only be appreciated by fans of the game (if at times begrudgingly).

A.J. Howells says

Read the review of the entire series (plus much more ranting on the overuse of exclamation points!!!!!!!!!!!!!!) at The Books in My Life.

The video game *Doom*'s plot can be stated in a single sentence. You are the lone surviving space marine gunning down legions of zombies and demons on Pluto's two moons and Hell itself. That's it. Grab your guns, shoot the bad guys, win the game. This does not make for very compelling fiction, so *Knee Deep in the Dead* expands big time.

Flynn "Fly" Taggard is facing a court-martial after punches his superior. This doesn't mean he's not heroic, as he was doing this to protect a group of monks in fictional Kefiristan from being mercilessly killed by a trigger happy marine. It does mean that he needs to be punished for his insubordination.

The punishment is to accompany a platoon into outer space to investigate the appearance of "creatures" on Pluto's moon Phobos (Latin for fear—dum dum dum!). However, he's not allowed to help the marines; instead, two guards babysit him on one end of the base while the marines advance to the other end to see what has happened to the Union Aerospace Corporation's (UAC) employees. When these marines are overheard being slaughtered on the guards' walkie-talkies, Fly Chuck Norris' his way to obtaining one of their weapons, then takes off after his comrades, which includes his "best buddy" Arlene Sanders.

(Warner: Spoilers are forthcoming, but it doesn't really matter. Just read on.)

None of this makes any goddamn sense.

But no matter because this is a book about shootin' shit. Fly guns down his former friends, now zombified.

He faces increasingly more difficult foes and begins to suspect they are all being controlled by an alien mastermind. He catches up with Arlene and faces down the towering steam-demon. They end up in Hell, but it's not really Hell, it's just an alien rendering of Hell. The team has intuitively figured out that the aliens have manufactured what humans believe hell spawn look like and are using the creatures to invade Earth, which at the end of the novel ominously hangs above Fly and Arlene, riddled with signs of alien attack.

And that's it. Sure, there are side plots and other characters, but the bulk of the novel is shootin' bad guys, which is all you really want from a book like this. It occurred to me as I was reading that if you had never played the game, you would have little idea what anything looked like. There are entire chapters that depict the characters moving through level after level. The bad guys are stationed where they are in the game. The trick walls are there. The winding, nonsensical landscape remains, explained away as alien architectural manipulation. The game's items—health packs, armor bonuses, soul spheres—are conveniently scattered about. Every single zombie and demon is included, though they are stupidly renamed by the duo ("imps" are now "spineys" and "cacodemons" are now "pumpkins"). The descriptions of the setting are loose and not detailed, so good luck if you've never played.

But is anyone who hasn't played the game going to read this? Doubtful. So let's forgive that one.

Let's not forgive the constant exposition. Nothing is revealed in this story. It's all explained by the characters, which makes Fly's attempts to come off as a rednecky all-American freedom fighter (oo-rah!) increasingly questionable. He downplays his intelligence, instead deferring to Arlene for brains, yet he quotes literature just as well as Arlene and packs a fairly impressive vocabulary to boot. Basically, and this becomes increasingly evident when Arlene picks up the narration in the second book, Hugh and Linaweafer are the narrators, not the characters. This is problematic considering the book is written entirely in first person. Characterizations are inconsistent and unrealistic. Fly can quote literature and knows a lot about science fiction because Arlene has dragged him to numerous movies (convenient, right?), yet he doesn't know who H. P. Lovecraft is. What this boils down to is lazy, rushed writing, and you can feel every second of it as the duo rips through the narrative and arrives at the inevitable set-up for book two.

But maybe we can forgive this. You're weren't expecting high art here, were you? We can even overlook the typos, which become increasingly ever-present as the series progresses. ("The" is spelled "hte" at one point.)

Here's the cardinal sin, the one that can't be forgiven by this reader: the overuse of the exclamation point. It plagues nearly every single page and translates to "Look how cool this is! It's just like the game!"

Let me randomly turn to a page and find an example: "My God, it even had a You Are Here arrow!" That took me about five seconds to find. Shall we try again? "No fair changing the rules now!" One second. "...[N]ow I was surrounded by a dozen floating pumpkins!" Ugh.

Overall, I'd pry this bad (and I do mean bad) boy open again in another ten years. Well, I would have if I didn't read the whole series this time around and realized exactly why the final two novels are so disliked.

Nick says

While reading this I was reminded of a Stephen King quote: "...most writers can remember the first book he/she put down thinking: I can do better than this."

Knee-Deep in Shit is more like it.

Doom Guy not only has a supporting cast, but he can't stop talking about them. Even in the middle of a demonic invasion, he'll spend as much time fighting as expressing his admiration for a female Marine and reluctance to go beyond the "buddy" zone. The same crutches are used over and over. So many times, he is spared fighting or struggling because the monsters turn on each other. Which, yes, it happened sometimes in the game. But this was clumsy. I was excited to get a cheap paperback as the basic theme of Doom has so much potential, but there are hardly even any naughty words. Hardened Marines are saying stuff like "you're full of spit."

The first couple chapters were pretty promising, with lines like "Mars loomed in the sky...burning red as all the blood of all the armies ever spilled in uncountable battles across the drooling stupid face of eternity." But the rest of it can be summed up with this gem as they hear the Cyberdemon in the distance: "We rotated slowly, tracking the noise, and I thought about that movie with the tyrannosaurus stomping around." Nice allusion, brah.

And another thing! He wouldn't shut the hell up about that one swastika in the game that was so controversial. I get it, include it in the story, point out how tasteless it was (Wolfenstein or no) and then move on. But no, he keeps bringing it up again and again. It's not funny, and it's not smart.

Can't believe I'm writing this, but I finally understand the appeal of writing fanfic. Pass over this vanilla book and write your own Doom story. It will probably be better.

Brett says

This is obviously not going to be high literature, or even groundbreaking writing - it's a simple, mindless, "junk food" kind of read; and for that I actually don't think it's that bad. In fact, it's actually quite okay.

The book doesn't really retell the story of the Doom video game - there wasn't really any story in that game - but reinterprets the game in a way that makes it readable. It brings in its own original sci-fi ideas, which, while half-baked, do move the book along at a compelling pace. It's honestly a stupid, 80's action movie kind of story, but you strangely find yourself wanting to know what happens next.

It's interesting to note that the book actually does capture the feeling of playing Doom pretty well - like the game, the book moves along at a visceral, breakneck speed. Those who have played Doom before will also find references to actual locations in the levels of the game present in the novel, which is always a nice touch.

If you want a quick sci-fi or video game based read, this is a decent choice, and pretty cheap too. It's nothing special, but it's not horrible either.

Also, I'd like to give a shout out to Super Bunny Hop on Youtube - his channel is what led me to this novel, and his videos are wonderful.

Nick says

DooM: Knee Deep in the Dead - Brad Linaweaver and Dafydd ab Hugh (1995)

With a game as big as DooM you would expect its paperback counterpart to be at least decent right? Wrong. The book starts you off in the perspective of Flynn "Fly" Taggard, who is a soldier in the middle east. Fly punches his CO and is then court martialed for insubordination, and is imprisoned on Mars's moon Phobos. On Phobos Fly is being moved by two guards when over the radio they hear screams of terror, following that Fly manages to talk the guards into letting him free and giving him a gun. Everything from here on out is just Taggard traveling through the base killing zombies and chasing his love interest Arlene Sanders, which he doesn't know if he likes her or not, and the story ends up being a strange love triangle. "I stared at the mark. A.S. Arne Saknussen; A.S... Arlene Sanders. My gut dropped to my boots. Arlene! Arlene was alive? It had to be, what other explanation was there? She was alive, and she was doing just what i was doing: going deeper into the station, hoping to find a radio or another living human, or maybe her old pal, Fly."

The book ends up being overly simple and awkward. The book is nothing like the game, if the book didn't have the name doom, and didn't take place on the same moon, then you would have no idea that it was related to the game series. The book made some of the demons from the game into zombies that can only be killed when they are shot in the head (cliche), but it does somewhat add to the story as it adds humanity to Fly's character because he is distressed about killing what used to be people he knew. But this is quickly forgotten later in the story when Fly talks deeply about the joy he gets from ripping them apart. To add insult to injury they made Fly a die hard soldier that has strong morals, which is nothing like the character he is based on, but the author ditched that aspect later on in the book as well. Overall the book has a hard time deciding what it wants to be, but that could be because it was written by two people.

If you wanna try the book out for yourself you can most likely find it at a 2nd hand book store, or you can buy it from amazon.com for \$1.96.

Adam says

The original Doom is a rather mindless and repetitive game, so to see this novelized was quite the curiosity. To further my resolve to read this, my friend went so far as to tell me the novel was actually very good. Based on this, I thought it was time to give this a try!

People expecting some grandiose literary work with a fully in depth story should probably look elsewhere. This book is written in the spirit of the game! Those complaining about the books sequence where the characters, mainly Flynn, go from room to room killing creatures have clearly never played this video game. Since I am writing this in 2008, Doom 3 has already come out, and I was appauled to see some reviewers comparing this story to that of Doom 3. This book came out long before Doom 3 was released AND it is based on the original Doom! How someone can sit here and attempt to make that logical comparison is absolutely beyond me.

Doom is a very straight forward game, you have no idea what's going on, but you clearly have to shoot these creatures and get out. The book plays off this concept and the largest edition you get is a developed character who actually has the goal of finding his friend. Otherwise this book captures the essence of Doom perfectly, it's also done very jokingly, which is great. It keeps the book moving with the cynical character and I found myself chuckling from time to time at the sheer absurdity of it! When Doom was originally created there was basically no story-line and the main object of the game was to "get out." While the objective remained the same for Doom 3, Doom 3 had a much more developed story, just don't expect that kind of treatment with these books.

If you're looking for an excellent adaptation in the spirit of the first Doom, then this is an absolutely must read. If you like dark and cynical sci-fi, this is also a must read. If you were looking for something serious, with detailed explanations about Doom and its background, or something scary... yeah stop whining about it and look someplace else. Enjoy this book for what it is; I sure did, and I consider myself to have a good sense of humor!

D.L. Denham says

DOOM is a recognizable brand to any 90s kid or true gamer from the PC age of first person video gaming. One of my most vivid memories as a kid is sitting in my underwear at the large IBM PC a kid, around the age of six, blasting away demons, boney, and hell-princes until late into the night. DOOM changed video gaming and provided a fun, horror filled universe for fans to live in. Sadly, as a kid, I never read the DOOM novelizations. Now, more than twenty years later, I am enjoying this series. The first book in the series is so far its best.

Imagine your worst nightmare becoming a reality. Humanity's conception of hell and horror are made real by alien invaders who have one prime objective: destroy humanity!

"Fly" Taggart and Arlene, "A.S.", must traverse Mars' moons and destroy thousands (literally!) of factory produced demon-like creatures and, wait for it . . . zombies! Yes, I think this is definitely one of those long lost zombie tales that should make a come back. Although I am personally burned out on the zombie genre (sorry The Walking Dead fans, but it is true), I felt revived by the undeads in the DOOM series. Their lemon-stinking existence is a constant reminder that when the dead walk the earth (DOOM #2), so will demons.

DOOM reads just like a live-action video game. The authors do a fun job to explain why rockets and MediPacks appear randomly when levers are pulled. Great imagination plus care and love was put into these stores for fans of DOOM. Knee-Deep in the Dead is by far the best of the four part series.
