



## Satan's Reach

*Eric Brown*

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## **Satan's Reach** Eric Brown

Satan's Reach is the second volume in the Weird Space series, a fast-paced action-adventure that pits humanity against the unimaginable Terror from Beyond. A thrilling Space Opera series created by master SF author Eric Brown.

Telepath Den Harper did the dirty work for the authoritarian Expansion, reading the minds of criminals, spies and undesirables. Unable to take the strain, he stole a starship and headed into the unknown, a sector of lawless space known as Satan's Reach. For five years he worked as a trader among the stars; then discovered that the Expansion had set a bounty hunter on his trail. But what does the Expansion want with a lowly telepath like Harper? Is there validity in the rumours that human space is being invaded by aliens from another realm? Harper finds out the answer to both these questions when he rescues an orphan girl from certain death; and comes face to face with the dreaded aliens known as the Weird. Satan's Reach is the second volume in the Weird Space series, a fast-paced action-adventure that pits humanity against the unimaginable Terror from Beyond.

## **Satan's Reach Details**

Date : Published July 30th 2013 by Abaddon (first published July 28th 2013)

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Author : Eric Brown

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## From Reader Review Satan's Reach for online ebook

### Argus says

A while back, I read Guardian's of the Phoenix, another book by Eric Brown, and when I rated it on here, the only thing I could think to say was that I was pretty sure that Mr. Brown has only a very loose idea of how certain scientific concepts work. Namely water, and it's ability to just 'go away'. Now, upon having read Satan's Reach, I think we can expand that list of topics to "how space works" and "how a multi-planet human society would colonize certain things, namely planets".

So yes, this is soft sci-fi. So soft you could fall asleep on it. So soft that it threatens to blow away in an equally soft breeze. So soft that it's like that weird material that is 99% air but can somehow diffuse the heat from a flamethrower. Very soft. And honestly, this time it didn't bother me so much. There's spaceships and an odd alien threat and the main character is kind of like a less funny and also telepathic Han Solo. Oh, and the telepaths AREN'T broken, like they are in so many settings. The in-universe limits on them are reasonable and made me feel like it really was just something that gave the main character an edge, instead of making him an unstoppable force.

Of course, I gave the book two stars, so I obviously didn't like it that much. What went wrong, you ask? Well, for all the somewhat interesting stuff that happened in the book, nothing really got done. And there was generally too much coincidence to make a convincing story.

There's a glimmer of a good story in here, but it's still working on coming out of its shell.

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### Kevin Syers says

Eric Brown is quickly becoming one of my favorite writers. He has his thumb on the pulse of what makes a good sci-fi story. It has great pacing, a solid story and characters that you really like reading about.

Devil's Nebula was said by many (myself included) to have feel like a page out of Firefly. If that's the case then Satan's Reach feels like a tale from the Catina on Mos Eisley. And I mean this in the best way possible. Five stars isn't enough (I'll just color in another one myself).

If you even somewhat enjoyed Devil's Nebula then you must give this book a shot.

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### Patrick Barnes says

#### Awesome sauce

I love this universe. A new set of heroes meet the old set and by then I think that you'll be as hooked as I am.

The interspecies interactions can be tough but feel very realistic. The interspecies politics get real convoluted in a messy but logical, real world way. Warfare isn't avoided at all cost but is not the desired outcome for any of the species. The battles are mostly a clash between two smugglers or an armed merchantman and a pirate ship.

The human governmental structure is effective but deadly in its infighting between agencies and bureaus. I mean really nasty, even to rise within a bureaucratic hierarchy.

The writing is clean, the dialogue is crisp, the action includes trying not to blow up too many things. The people are interesting and the major threat from an alien race is scary. This is a very good universe to explore.

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### **Lee Pfahler says**

A good Brown book but not one of his better ones.

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### **Jason says**

4.5 Stars

Satan's Reach is the rare case where the sequel out classes the original. Book Two in Eric Brown's Weird Space series can be classified as a romp through space. This book centers on a rogue telepath named Den Harper. He is a loner, a space trader, and a person with many secrets. Satan's Reach is a much more intimate story than The Devil's Nebula. I loved what a fast paced adventure story that this played out to be.

Both of these books are classified as space operas and even said to be in the hard science fiction genre. But, this is not correct as they are light fare on both accounts and easily accessible to even non fans of the genre. There is no science or math class to be found in these pages. The world building sets things up to easily be followed, even when great distances are covered or even talked about.

Brown's writing style and ability to pen the chase is what makes this book really work. I devoured the pages. He adds tension and humor and has you rooting for our hero right from the start. I liked that this book takes place in the same world as the first book. It covers many of the overall main story lines even though this is a new cast in a new place. I couldn't help but be reminded of Firefly or Wooding 's amazing Tales of the Ketty Jay. All of which are like Sphagetti Westerns in space.

I loved this book and wanted my popcorn with it as I traveled through space with Den and Zeela. The ending is simply spectacular and really sets up further books in the Weird Space series... Highly recommended!

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### **Tabitha says**

I'd give it a 3.5 but Goodreads doesn't do halvesies.

Satan's Reach was one of the first few books I've read in what my science fiction friend told me is considered "hard sci-fi." It is also the second book written in what is planned to be a shared universe by any number of authors. I did not happen to read the first book because I was told that it wasn't absolutely necessary to still be able to enjoy Satan's Reach. Which was thankfully true. So you can't go into this book expecting it to be a sequel to the first book, The Devil's Nebula because it is not.

The only other shared universe type books I've read have been a lot of Dragonlance universe and a few short

stories from the superheros Wild Cards universe. I love the idea of a world where different authors can bring something to the plate and explore different story lines. Usually I've seen that one author will explore a storyline of one character/group and complete that. These first two books written by Eric Brown didn't seem to follow that and were more like their own stories. Though I didn't read the first book I took a look at the description and didn't feel lost at all. There is probably some bigger picture items that I might not be on the up and up about but that didn't take away from my enjoyment of Satan's Reach.

I do like Eric Brown's writing style and as a newbie to the hard sci-fi genre I didn't think it was too over my head or overly techie. It would definitely be a definite change for any reader that is used to reading fantasy and little to no actual science fiction. When I say science fiction I'm talking space opera, everything is in outer space, mostly on planets that are not earth, with advanced technology and alien races. While, I've read quite a lot of books that have science fiction elements, I haven't read many that are "hard sci-fi" or "space operas." Essentially, like reading Star Trek instead of watching it. For some people it would be a genre much harder to read than to watch. I think I might fall into that category but I still enjoyed Satan's Reach and think I will continue to try out these types of sci-fi books as I really do love the kind of stories you can get exploring the universe.

The main character Den Harper is a telepath on the run. Since he's on the run he's pretty much on his own and all he has is what he does, his skills as a telepath and his ship's AI, Judi. Which is pretty neat if I might add. I always love when an AI is involved in a book where you can see them as a character/person and not just extra fluff. So I enjoyed that interaction between them. Things move along at a great pace and Den isn't alone for long because he rescues a girl named Zeela. Then of course throw into the mix that Den has bounty hunters on his trail and we've got ourselves a very entertaining story.

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## Mark says

Originally published at Walker of Worlds.

Weird Space is the shared universe Eric Brown created for Abaddon Books so they could add a Space Opera setting to their impressive collection of on-going series. While The Devil's Nebula set the scene, introduced the Weird, and gave little tidbits of background information, Satan's Reach takes many of these aspects and runs with them. Admittedly I was expecting something very different to what I read within the pages of Satan's Reach, but I eventually understood my reaction and how I had subconsciously skewed my expectations.

Den Harper is a runaway telepath now trading outside of the human controlled Expansion in Satan's Reach. It is here that he makes his living, taking jobs throughout that region of space and making ends meet. With only the ship - along with its AI Judi - he stole when he fled the Expansion, Harper lives a lonely life with much in his past that he has tried to leave behind. But when a trade goes wrong on the planet of Ajanta he ends up escaping with his life, and with a new companion, Zeela, that he rescues from the clutches of the planets inhabitants. As he tries to decide what to do with her, he discovers that the Expansion are once again on his trail and determined to track him down. With both the bounty hunters and the Ajantans after him he must decide where to go, and just how he can escape their seemingly obsessive need to catch him.

I mentioned earlier that Satan's Reach was not the book I expected. Truth be told, I expected more of a sequel to The Devil's Nebula, but that is not the case. The events depicted in The Devil's Nebula with the discovery of the Weird play a large role in the bigger picture, but not quite in the story. Those that have read the Devil's Nebula will know that the Weird are invading both human and Vetch space, and the seemingly empty ships discovered on planets by both species were host to parasites sent out by the Weird in an attempt

to infiltrate the governments of both cultures. However, telepaths can spot these parasites in the minds of the infected, even when the infected don't know it themselves. It is this dire need to dig out the infected that leads the Expansion to start tracking down missing telepaths, hence that mission that Janaker and Kreller are sent on to apprehend Den Harper.

Okay, there's a little background for you to see the overall picture in the universe of Weird Space. Now, on to Satan's Reach with some more detailed thoughts.

What I described above is known to the reader in Satan's Reach, but, other than the plot thread following the bounty hunters, it is not an aspect touched on for most of the novel. What we have here is a stand-alone story that fits into this setting. Den Harper goes about his business none the wiser about the danger to humanity, dealing and running from dangerous aliens that will stop at nothing to get their hands on Zeela. The bounty hunters add the more wide-reaching aspect, but it doesn't disrupt the story that Brown is telling about this runaway telepath.

Harper is an interesting character. He lives alone on his ship with the controlling AI, Judi. They have an easy relationship more like crew members than anything else, and it adds extra depth to his history. When Zeela joins him after the rescue on Ajanta things are shaken up a little. We slowly learn more about Harper and his past, the reason he is on the run, and the circumstances surrounding it all. There are additional aspects that play a larger role, but they were perhaps underplayed until they were really needed.

One of the other things I enjoyed most in Satan's Reach was the bounty hunter team of Janaker, a human with clear issues, and Kreller, a Vetch. While the Vetch made a brief appearance in The Devil's Nebula, nothing much else was explained about them, with just some comments here and there. In Satan's Reach we have a Vetch as part of the story, and despite Kreller being the only member of his species to show his face, it was a joy to read his scenes. Not only did Brown create an interesting race and character, the pairing of Janaker and Kreller provided plenty of background and detail without obviously doing so. I'll be looking forward to see what else can be done in the future with the Vetch.

As for the Weird, well... as I mentioned, they're part of the bigger picture, yet the threat they pose only comes to the fore towards the end of the novel. When it happens it feels like Harper's story finally slots into this big threat, and the revelations that take place certainly make for a gripping and exciting finale. I perhaps would have liked to have seen more of the Weird threat present in Satan's Reach, but I'm holding out hope that a future novel will continue the story of the characters we've met here - it would be a shame not to.

And all this brings me back to my thoughts on Satan's Reach as a whole. Firstly, let me say that I enjoyed it a great deal, but I'm not sure how successful it is in continuing the shared world setting. Without a doubt it uses the setting to its advantage, but it occasionally comes across as a novel that isn't quite sure what it is. This is, perhaps, simply my view of the novel due to my relative lack of experience in shared world reading. It could also be that these are the sort of novels that need to be written early on to build a successful setting. Either way I'll be tuning in for the next Weird Space instalment.

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## Genaro says

My critique of this novel is that it works well for young readers of sci-fi lite, but for anyone over the age of 16, the relationship between Harper and Zeela is the most troubling aspect of this book, and goes well beyond any of the other flaws - be they scientific, or those related to character development (one dimensional). I was simply pulled out of the story each time an adult on scene did not so much as raise an eyebrow over concerns about what these two might be doing.

## S.J. Higbee says

Den is a likeable chap in a tricky situation, which gets steadily trickier as this fast-paced, enjoyable space opera progresses. This is space opera where the universe is heaving with multitudes of aliens and faster-than-light travels occurs such that zipping between planets takes a matter of weeks. That's okay – I can happily cope with that. Brown evokes a vivid range of worlds with differing climates, customs and lifestyles in amongst the mayhem, which I thoroughly enjoyed. I also liked the very efficient and adaptable spaceship Den has managed to snag for himself.

Initially, I thought it was all a bit too good to be true, but Brown manages to nicely weave into the storyline the reason why said ship is quite so nifty and needless to say, it all ends in tears... I liked the fact that Den's gift of telepathy comes at a terrible price – he finds it painful to mindread, particularly alien minds so spends most of his time heavily shielded. He is also rather withdrawn, preferring his own company, which I found entirely plausible.

The story development is excellent – just when I thought it couldn't get any worse, it did so that I read far later into the night when I should have put the book down and got some sleep. Any niggles – I could have done without the romantic element as I thought it out of character for both the protagonists concerned. But as there are two more books in this series, I'm guessing it isn't all going to run smoothly from hereon in.

Overall, a cracking read from a writer who really knows his craft and if you like your space opera with plenty of excitement and enjoyable worlds, then this one is recommended.

8/10

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## Mieneke says

*Satan's Reach* is the second book set in the shared world of the Weird Space, a property developed by Eric Brown for Abaddon Books. Being rather unfamiliar with shared worlds, especially in book form, I was curious to see what it would be like to move away from that first story told in *The Devil's Nebula* and start all over with new characters in a new place. Would we see more of the protagonists in the first book? Would what happened there impact the story much? The answers to both questions would be yes and no. We do see Carew and crew and the events from *The Devil's Nebula* certainly impact Den Harper's story in *Satan's Reach*, but we don't meet up with Carew until almost at the end of the book and the influence on Harper's story is indirect at best. But knowing the events from the first book makes for a richer reading experience, plus it is fun to spot things we know the background for.

As a story, *Satan's Reach* stands alone quite well and can certainly serve as an entry point into the universe. The story stars Den Harper, a telepath on the run from the Expansion, who's made his living as a trader in the section of space called Satan's Reach. He's an interesting fellow and I liked the way telepathy works in this universe: it's a skill that has to be activated in those that have it the capacity for it through an operation and it needs an external device, a ferromnière, to allow the telepaths to actually be able to read people. What I liked about this limitation is that it makes reading someone's mind becomes a conscious decision, not something that can happen by accident. A fact Brown uses to great effect in his development of Harper's character and of the relationship between him and Zeela Antarivo, the orphan girl he rescues from a set of nasty frog-like aliens. Brown manages to give us a pretty thoroughly rounded character in Harper, with his history filled in and his desires made plain, he's far more complex than the 281 pages of the book would seem to allow for.

Then again, this shouldn't be surprising as its often Brown's characters that draw me most to his work.

While I liked Zeela as a character, I found her falling in love with Harper as quickly as she does one of the weak points of the novel. Even if she's following the classic "fall in love with your saviour"-trope and going through the horror Brown puts them through together would naturally create a bond, I still thought it was too easy on her part. It's only Harper's atrocious past when it comes to love that puts the brakes on anything happening between them for a while. She made up for this in spades with her spunk and resilience though. I loved that even when she frightened out of her mind, she doesn't freeze, but takes action, sometimes unexpectedly effective action at that.

Harper and Zeela face two separate sets of antagonists, one set is comprised of the Ajantans, the aliens set on retrieving Zeela, and the other of a couple of bounty hunters sent to bring Harper back to the Expansion. I especially liked this last set of characters: a human bounty hunter, Sharl Janaker, and the Vetch companion imposed on her by her Expansion employers, called Helsh Kreller. Janaker is an interesting window through which to show the reader more about the Vetch – the alien race that has been in conflict with the human Expansion for eons – as she carries all the prejudices about them over into her observations of Kreller. What is refreshing is that she is at times surprised by his reactions and his conduct in a positive way and that while she never comes to like him, she does respect him.

Once all parties come together after a race through space, there are some major revelations and twists that I hadn't expected or seen coming and they create an elegant hook for more stories set in this universe. It'll be interesting to see whether the next Weird Space book will again be written by Brown or if another writer will tell us his tale set in Weird Space. Either way, I quite enjoyed *Satan's Reach* and I'm keen to see where the story will go and to learn more about the Weird and the battle against them.

This book was provided for review by the publisher.

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### **Greg Lindsay says**

Excellent story, great characters.

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### **Jennifer says**

Another fun read, the writer does a good job with chases and mystery. I enjoyed the story but was at times annoyed with the characters. The world/verse seems to be very Firefly in concept, authoritarian vs libertarian world views are a source of the conflicts within the Weird Space series.

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### **Andrew Kim says**

The second book of the Weird series. I had enjoyed the first - a sci-fi novelist that tells a story, with great and believable characters. I was not disappointed in the second and now looking forward to reading the 3rd chapter.

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## David 23 says

It's a descent sequel and an okay yarn. I liked the story. I figured out who the bounty hunter was way too easily but it was good.

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## Les says

Carrying on from events a little while after those of *The Devil's Nebula*, this book rips into another action-packed adventure. This time, we follow Den, a runaway telepath, who is on the run from a double set of enemies. The flight takes us across a huge swath of space known as Satan's Reach and we drop in on some wonderful locations and planets along the way. By now, the Vetch and humans have formed an uneasy alliance to deal with the threat of The Weird, of whom we learn a bit more and their desire to occupy known space from their place in another dimension. At the end of the book we again meet some characters from the first book, and the story hints at another installment, which I hope gets written, although I've not heard anything yet. All in all, Eric Brown fails to disappoint me again.

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