



## The Sharp End

*David Drake*

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## **The Sharp End** David Drake

Gangs ruled Cantilucca. Guns were the only law, and there was no lack of guns. It was hard to imagine matters getting worse. Until the survey team arrived ...

Major Matthew Coke was not a squeamish man, but the state of affairs on Cantilucca turned his stomach. He was only human after all. Where some of the rest of his team were concerned, it was difficult to be sure. Five professional mercenaries who'd learned the hard way that in the end they could defeat anything - except their own consciences.

## **The Sharp End Details**

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Author : David Drake

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# From Reader Review The Sharp End for online ebook

## Gail says

This book felt a little like a group of short stories that got assembled into a novel. The first half is the assembling of a "scouting" company (or some name like that). It gathers up a varied bunch of Hammer's Slammers who are coming off injuries or screw-ups or other problems--and devotes a chapter to what happened to each of them that put them in this position. So when the company is assembled, we know more about them than they do about each other. Once assembled, they are sent off to a planet where the boss Hammer is considering taking on a contract for his mercenaries. The military adventure begins there. Lots of action. Lots of shooting and blowing stuff up. Good read.

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## David says

I have to say, it takes real effort to make a military sci-fi story boring. But I think that Drake managed to do it here. The opening introductory stories were dull, unengaging and not particularly well-written. For the most part, I felt no attachment whatsoever to the characters. And one of the intro stories (the longest, if I remember correctly) seemed completely implausible. Not recommended.

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## Will says

I should say right off the bat that I do like the whole "shooty death kill" sci-fi sub-genre, and David Drake's "Hammer's Slammers" books are TOTALLY that. And, frankly, not a whole lot more...most of the books in this "series" (quotes because it isn't really a series, just a bunch of novels and short stories dealing with the same mercenary organization which have a consistent supporting cast, but generally different protagonists) basically star the "super tanks" and follow a very consistent pattern. VERY consistent...like, kind of almost the same story...

Having said that, this book is actually quite different. Centering on a small unit sent to "feel out" the situation with potential clients, the novel is structured more like an old western movie, and as anyone who is a fan of the show "Firefly" can tell you, combining western story elements with science fiction can work very well, if done well. It is done well here.

The "Hammer" tales can be pretty darn thin on characterization, but this novel (novella? it's really quite short) is a pleasant exception, with better drawn characters than the norm for these books. The setting of the planet is well drawn, the factions are a little too "scum and villainy", perhaps, but they are FUN bad guys, and the action is fast and entertaining. The plot is reminiscent of "Yojimbo/A Fistful Of Dollars", but well constructed, with enough twists to keep it interesting without getting needlessly complicated. And again, the action...Drake is a master of writing a rollicking good action sequence, and he's at the top of his form here. The sequences are quite graphically violent, which may be a turn-off to some, but Drake is a combat veteran, and actually wrote a very interesting explanatory prologue to one of the "Slammers" story collection where he discussed his reasons for making his violence actually hurt. (This little "essay" is well worth reading in it's own right and for it's own merits.)

Overall I'd have to say that this is the best of the "Hammer's Slammers" stories. It's also the most atypical, which may account for that...? Fans of military science fiction should like it, and it's a good "intro" for anyone who hasn't read much of that kind of book but may be curious. Also any "Firefly" fans will likely dig it.

I feel I should mention that David Drake has done what I consider to be much more satisfying character building in some of his other series than in the "Slammers" works. Specifically, the "Lt. Leary Commanding" novels combine his flair for action with more thoroughly realized characters. Those novels all have a serious naval flavor to them, and are excellent.

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### **Eden Celeste says**

I am absolutely crazy about Drake's Hammer Slammers books, and in my mind this is the best of the bunch. Unlike his other Slammers books this one has less to do with futuristic tank warfare and more to do with a team of elite soldiers sent in to "fix" a problem. This book contains violence, intense action and alternative lifestyles.

One of my favorite things about Drake's writing is his female characters. Drake treats both male and female characters equally, and except for the names they are interchangeable. My second favorite thing about these books is that there are no heros and it's all a matter of point of view. Which is far more realistic than most fantasy or sci-fi are. Bravo I say!

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### **David Johnston says**

I'm of the school of thought that holds that you can determine things about an author by reading their books. And what I determined from this one is that David Drake probably enjoyed watching a Fistful of Dollars. Sure the Clint Eastwood film was a westernization of Yojimbo which was an Easternization of Red Harvest, but The Sharp End feels like a Spaghetti western as a small group of mercenaries wander into Columbia IN SPACE and play two warring drug cartels against each other before just killing everyone in a kind of pointless gesture since the people the mercenaries kill were all going to die soon anyway.

The other thing I determined was that Drake must have really regretted killing Joachim Steuben, the gay gunslinger who used to be Hammer's right hand man because here he is again, undead and using a new name...for...some reason. It doesn't really make sense. He hints that the apparent kill shot was stopped by a vest but I recall Steuben being definitely perforated and there's no hint whatsoever that there's an actual reason why Steuben would have faked his death and yet still be working for Hammer in a paper-thin disguise. Maybe Steuben's a vampire and doesn't want Hammer to know, his new identity being down at the bottom where Hammer who is now a planetary leader will never see him.

On the other hand I can see why Drake would want his badass gunslinger around for his tribute to spaghetti westerns so I guess we just go with it.

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## **Bob Miller says**

We send out men and young men in an attempt to work our will on the world. All too often the place we send them cuts them, damages them. This is story of a group that was good enough to write its own ticket in that war/battle place called The Sharp End. I just this month reread this. I was right. This book, (football simile coming up Warning) like Troy Aikman and Johnny Unitas, is something special.

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## **Craig says**

This isn't really a Hammer's Slammers tank novel exactly, more of a cathartic examination of survival and necessity and perhaps redemption and recovery. It's a stark and brutal and unrelenting book, very dark yet with bits of hope and true character throughout. It seemed to me to be an important book that marked a point in Drake's writing where he could more comfortably move on to different attitudes and considerations, and the tone allowed the reader to move on with him. It's a very thoughtful and questioning book, despite the ultra-violent actions.

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## **Russ Tarvin says**

I liked this book. It was like every spaghetti western from my childhood rolled into one story. The influences hit you in the face if you are familiar with the westerns they are based on. He weaved them well. Not a work of literary excellence, but one hell of a good ride and fun read.

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## **Garry Wyatt says**

Almost the perfect military science fiction novel.

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## **Fredrick Danysh says**

The planet Cantilucca is controlled by two rival drugs cartels. The Frisian Defense Force is a military force for hire built around Hammer's Slammers. A survey team of misfits and screw ups is sent to the planet and to suggest which side to hire out to. There is a short background on each member and why they were assigned. But sometimes things take are more important than business.

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## **Justin Knighton says**

I suggest reading this book because it talks about gangs trying to survive in the land of cantilucca. The only weapon they can use is guns. the top gang was called the survey team. Major Mathew Coke is a defensive force. Sten Moden is the captain of the group. Robert Barbour is the one that gathers information for the group. Mary Margulies is a survivor that was saved. Niko is a technician that is very young and Johann is a

person that wants to make a new life and help out the team

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### **Larry says**

Hammer's Slammers is not a "series" as much as it is a collection of books and short stories. It's probably classified as Military Science Fiction – but, other than weapons technology (futuristic – but plausible and even likely), there's not a lot of "Sci-Fi" to it. "The Sharpe End" is a standalone novel – and I wish I would have read this book first. Upfront, it gives general background on the mercenaries, Hammer's Slammers.

On a "survey" (really an intelligence gathering mission) to a plant run by cartel-like gangs – kind-of Crips and Bloods – this six person team are like salesmen for the mercenary organization, just selling their services to the highest bidder. Yet, in the end, the story has shades of "The Magnificent Seven".

Drake is definitely a "shoot-'em-up-bang-bang" writer. (I swear, it's got to be 75% is ACTION.) We're not talking great literature here, but it's now a comic book either. I found the characters very interesting and would probably enjoy reading other stories of their adventures. While I could not make this standard fare, this escapes reading is fun every once in a while.

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### **Mark says**

A group of talented but wounded (physically or emotionally) mercenaries are assigned to sell their services in the middle of a planet's gang war. But their consciences won't let them support either of the gangs...

As usual Drake handles the characters and action deftly and quickly. A bit unrealistically hopeful in that almost all the "good guys" come out with no new scars, but the depiction of the hopelessness of the civilian lives makes up for that.

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### **Tim Gray says**

Well written military science fiction - so if you like that, this one is for you. If you don't, go elsewhere!

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### **Wilson E. Stevens Sr. says**

This was a very good book as you can see by how I rated it. I liked the way each major character was introduced before the mission was set up, and then able to watch the reactions during the mission. I liked the technology used to keep them posted and allow them to do the job they all wanted to get done. While it was a war book with a lot of shooting and blood and guts, it was nicely done. I will probably read this one again in six months or year or more. Well worth keeping in my library to read again.

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