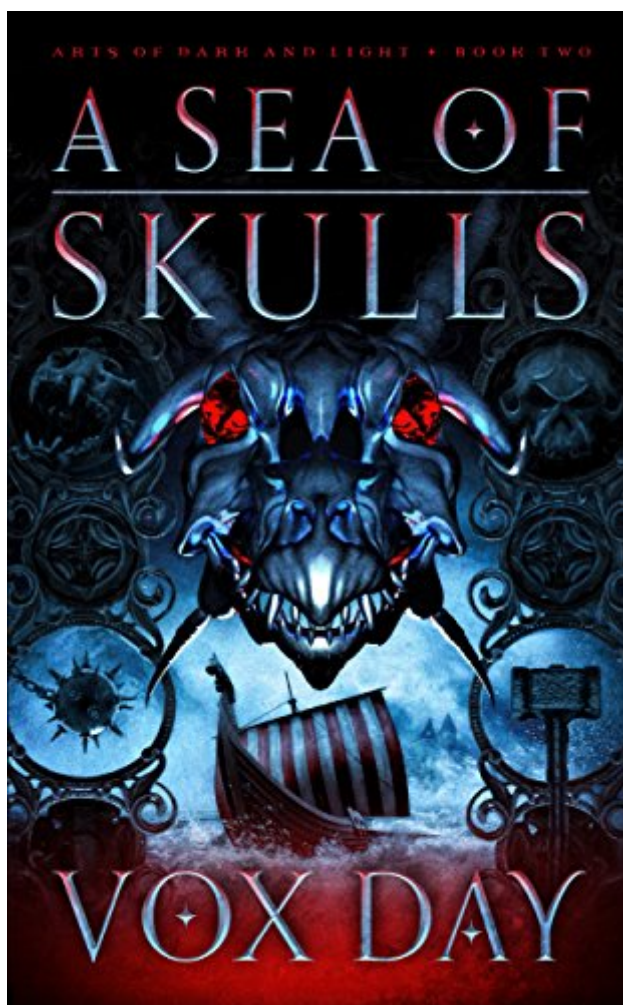


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# A Sea Of Skulls (Arts Of Dark And Light)



## Synopsis

The 2017 Dragon Award Finalist for Best Fantasy Novel In Selenoth, the war drums are beating throughout the land. The savage orcs of Hagahorn and Zoth Ommog are on the move, imperiling Man, Dwarf, and Elf alike. The Houses Martial of Amorr have gone to war with each other, pitting legion against legion, and family against family, as civil war wracks the disintegrating Empire. In the north, inhuman wolf-demons besiege the last redoubt of Man in the White Sea, while in Savondir, the royal house of de Mirid desperately prepares to defend the kingdom against an invading army that is larger than any it has ever faced before. And in the underground realm of the King of Iron Mountain, a strange new enemy has been attacking dwarf villages throughout the Underdeep. Beneath the widespread violence that has seized all Selenoth in its grasp, a select few are beginning to recognize the appearance of a historic pattern of almost unimaginable proportions. Are all these conflicts involving Orc, Elf, Man, and Dwarf the natural result of inevitable rivalries, or are they little more than battlegrounds in an ancient war that began long before the dawn of time? Epic fantasy at its deepest and most intense. A SEA OF SKULLS is Book II in the ARTS OF DARK AND LIGHT series that began with A THRONE OF BONES.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

After a brief pause (as Elves count it), Selenoth returns. Mysteries begun in *A Throne of Bones*, *A Magic Broken* and *the Last Witchking* and the Hugo-nominated *Opera Vita Aeterna* begin to unfold very carefully now, but with great speed and also with great promise of resolution in the third novel, which I believe is slated to come out some time during the collapse of the Union of American States. Fortunately, that's only a few years off. If you have found yourself slipping on the ice of George R.R. Martin's now fireless heptalogy, this efficient follow-up to *A Throne of Bones* is a good sign that the mistake of "meandering bloat" will not be repeated. Day not only works with a smaller number of perspective characters, allowing the reader a narrower assemblage to navigate, but his characters tend to find more meaningful, rooted action while "on camera." One of Day's stronger qualities is his modeling of characters. It is not by accident that his vibrant array of characters include a student of war and scripture, an adept of magic put out to stud, an alien ex-slave, and other characters who have two distinct skill sets. This "skill-pair" allows the characters to be nuanced and complex while also providing natural storylines. An example: After studying the details of an enemy's battle tactics and tendencies over the course of several pages, the perspective character Marcus develops a strategy based on, but modified by, his understanding of an episode in military history. When told he's crazy for intending to attack them, he replies with scripture instead of a martial analysis: "I'm not intending to attack them, Monseigneur. I intend to kill them. The larger part of them, I expect. If you will excuse a paraphrase of the Sacred Word of Our Lord, their slain will be thrown out, their dead bodies will stink, and the March will be soaked with their blood." The seeming incongruity of the "skill-pair" of every modeled character serves as a controlling agent for the storyline, allowing for surprises and twists without sending the reader off into unsatisfying rabbit trails. The incongruity serves as a reality simulator and it really proves its worth in *A Sea of Skulls*. In a multi-perspective historical sweep of an entire fantasy continent, the most intrepid author is also the one most likely to lose his way. If he does, no creative structuring of the trilogy's climax is ever going to work. *A Sea of Skulls* is built end-to-end to lay the foundation for a third book will providing a satisfying read on its own. And it relies on monsters to pull it off. Like any good Book II, *A Sea of Skulls* starts horrifically dark and senseless. In an opening scene, Day establishes the orcs and goblins as a bestial and worthy force to shepherd, in their own maniacal way, the arc of a story with such scope. The orc invasion serves as something of binding agent for the novel, It is somewhat less cryptic and deceptive (though not without its own mysteries) than the subtle social and military intrigues of *A*

Throne of Bones. It is a brutish disaster that impacts the widely scattered characters in various ways. I highly recommend that you read the following in order to get the most out of Sea of Skulls: A Magic Broken, A Throne of Bones, The Last Witchking, Opera Vita Aeterna, Wardog's Coin (and read the poem In Flanders Fields after you do it, if you really want its edge to sink in), and Summa Elvetica: A Causuistry of the Elvish Controversy. After you do, my unreserved recommendation is that you dive in to Sea of Skulls. Just know that first step is a doozy. Then it is doozies all the way down. You will happily receive more clues about the great enigma of the North, and the arguments and inquiries into the very nature of magic are so realistic you might join a side in the debate. Can the exiled men of the North every hope to reclaim their homeland from the wolfen scourge? Is Fortune the only god in a world of loss? Can man master magic if he cannot tame his heart?

Fantastic read. In my mind's eye I can visit Middle Earth and Narnia. But imagine if you take such a tour with Marcus Agrippa as your guide. That is this book and more. The characters all grow in a way that is true to themselves. The battles become a character and each fight develops in a realistic way, even with magic. Everything builds in this book. Each skirmish hints at a bigger fight ahead. Each decision is marching us closer to something hiding around the edges. I look forward to more.

Even better than the first. The perspectives were well written and differed entirely on the concepts of civilization and what it means for each to make war. Whether it is from an orc captain or an elven wing of flying calvary, a stranded Legion, a feudal kingdom of knights and let us not forget the Vikings. All unique with a current of practical realism in how strategy and tactics play out in total war including the inner turmoil of personal ideology of each main character. What is the right choice? What pieces make up the foundation of how to even begin to inform one of which choice is wisdom and which folly. Epic on the level of Tolkien, but written in a totally different way, for a different generation of audience. Tolkien addressed good and evil of his generations struggle, while Day is focused on the heart of his own generation. Good and evil are timeless, but the battlefield shifts with the times and Day nails it.

Probably my favorite fantasy series of the decade. It's the kind of book in which you can lose an entire day and be better off for it. Vox has certainly recaptured the high ground in fantasy that others have abandoned. From epic battles to palace intrigue, his easy-reading style conveys a depth of intellect that goes well beyond what is being churned out by the so-called "award winners" of science fiction and fantasy today. I highly recommend this series.

Awaiting the next book in the series, patiently but eagerly. Brilliant fantasy reminiscent of LOTR. Epic battles between good and evil; intense political intrigue, a series of story lines gathering inexorably towards ... well, I will have to read the next book to know, won't I?

Horrible. I was approaching the end of the book and realized that the next book in the series hasn't been written yet. I may have to wait years before I can read it. The book was great, the character and cultural development are amazing. I am so looking forward to the next book in the series. Some of the descriptions are more graphic and crude than necessary.

Even better than ATOB. The wait was definitely worth it.

Really enjoyed this one. Kept the tone of the first book and built on the world very well. I recommended this series to my friends. Can't wait for the next book...

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