



## Surface Detail (Culture)

By Iain M. Banks

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### Surface Detail (Culture) By Iain M. Banks

It begins in the realm of the Real, where matter still matters.

It begins with a murder. And it will not end until the Culture has gone to war with death itself.

Lededje Y'breq is one of the Intagliated, her marked body bearing witness to a family shame, her life belonging to a man whose lust for power is without limit. Prepared to risk everything for her freedom, her release, when it comes, is at a price, and to put things right she will need the help of the Culture.

Benevolent, enlightened and almost infinitely resourceful though it may be, the Culture can only do so much for any individual. With the assistance of one of its most powerful - and arguably deranged - warships, Lededje finds herself heading into a combat zone not even sure which side the Culture is really on. A war - brutal, far-reaching - is already raging within the digital realms that store the souls of the dead, and it's about to erupt into reality.

It started in the realm of the Real and that is where it will end. It will touch countless lives and affect entire civilizations, but at the center of it all is a young woman whose need for revenge masks another motive altogether.

SURFACE DETAIL is Iain M. Banks' new Culture novel, a breathtaking achievement from a writer whose body of work is without parallel in the modern history of science fiction.

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## Surface Detail (Culture) By Iain M. Banks Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Banks's labyrinthine and devious ninth Culture space opera novel (after 2008's *Matter*) adeptly shifts perspective between vast concepts and individual passions. The blissfully disorganized, galaxy-spanning Culture has fabulous technology that gives human and alien entities freedom to choose who and what they want to be. When sex slave Lededje Y'breq is murdered by a politician on the planet Sichult, the artificial intelligence running one of the Culture's immense starships resurrects her so she can seek revenge.

Meanwhile, the Culture is uneasily watching the conflict over whether to preserve virtual Hells for the souls of "sinners" or give them the release of death. Leaping with jaw-dropping speed from character to character and from reality to virtuality, the narrative swiftly pulls these concerns together. New readers may be taken aback by the rapid pace, but fans will dive right in and won't come up for air until the final page. (Nov.) (c) Copyright © PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.

From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Iain M. Banks's Culture novels, one suspects, won't be fully appreciated by any but avid SF readers for quite some time, even if the author routinely reaches beyond classification. His world building is never less than spectacular. The AI components of his stories prompt comparisons to Philip K. Dick; his rich backdrops certainly influenced those of Alastair Reynolds and China Mieville. Yet what separates Banks from the ranks of other SF writers is the human component that thrives postsingularity—after technology has made its creators obsolete. Banks's trademark—big ideas and equally compelling individual stories mingling seamlessly—is on full display here.

From [Booklist](#)

Beginning with *Consider Phlebas* (1987), Banks' Culture novels have showcased his prodigious talent for world building, featuring extravagant vistas of superadvanced technological civilizations and their virtual-reality playgrounds. In the ninth outsize installment, Banks juggles multiple plot threads on a sweeping canvas, embracing Culture-based artificial worlds known as orbitals, supremely powerful artificial intelligences, and virtual heavens and hells. One story line follows the murder and AI-facilitated resurrection of tattooed sex slave Lededje Y'breq, who is willingly conscripted in a plan to exact revenge on her politician killer and shift the balance of power between embattled Culture factions. Another follows the efforts of two quadruped creatures called Pavuleans to pry their way out of a secret virtual hell and back into the Real, where wealthy moguls are gearing up for war among the digital realms. While each Culture novel can be read alone, newcomers are advised to breathe deeply before diving in, as Banks never lets up in a dizzying array of characters, mind-bending ideas, and dazzling action. --Carl Hays

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**Arturo Hasan:**

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**Donald Freeman:**

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