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Use Of Weapons



Synopsis

The man known as Cheradenine Zakalwe was one of Special Circumstances' foremost agents, changing the destiny of planets to suit the Culture through intrigue, dirty tricks, and military action. The woman known as Diziet Sma had plucked him from obscurity and pushed him toward his present eminence, but despite all their dealings she did not know him as well as she thought. The drone known as Skaffen-Amtiskaw knew both of these people. It had once saved the woman's life by massacring her attackers in a particularly bloody manner. It believed the man to be a lost cause. But not even its machine could see the horrors in his past. Ferociously intelligent, both witty and horrific, *Use of Weapons* is a masterpiece of science fiction.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Use of Weapons is set around the edges of Banks' utopian star-civilization the Culture, which is featured in a number of Banks' books. Cheradenine Zakalwe is not a Culture citizen, but he has been employed by the Special Circumstances branch of the Culture's Contact section as a mercenary, trying to influence conflicts on a variety of planets to be resolved in the direction the Culture prefers. As the main action of the story opens, Zakalwe has "retired" from SC. Diziet Sma, who has been Zakalwe's "control" in the past, is rudely summoned from her latest (quite pleasurable) assignment in order to find Zakalwe and recruit him for one more emergency mission (involving a situation with which Zakalwe was previously involved). From this point, the novel progresses in two main directions. The main branch of the story follows Sma forward in time, as she

pursues and eventually finds Zakalwe, and as Sma and Zakalwe accomplish, in general terms, the mission on which the SC branch has sent them. This involves convincing a retired politician who supports the "right" side (anti-terraforming, pro-Machine Intelligence) of a conflict in an unstable star cluster to return to the arena and forestall a coming war, and then also involves some intervention in a "brushfire" which has broken out as a precursor to the war. This story is exciting and enjoyable, with plenty of Banksian action, Banksian scenery, and Banksian humor, the last as usual particularly embodied in the character of Sma's drone assistant, Skaffen-Amtiskaw. (Banks' machine characters are inveterate scene-stealers.

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