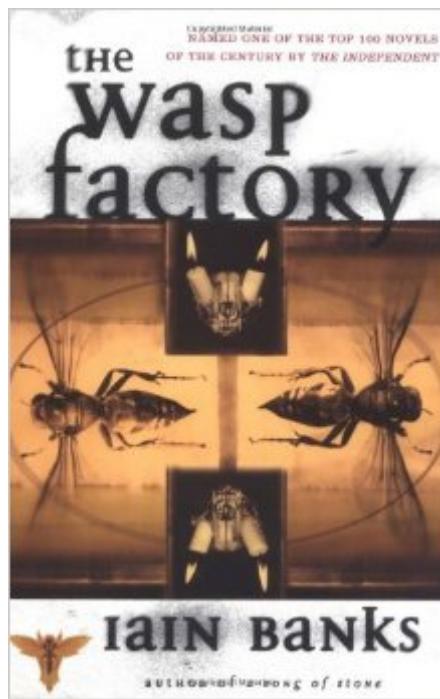


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The WASP FACTORY: A NOVEL



Synopsis

The polarizing literary debut by Scottish author Ian Banks, *The Wasp Factory* is the bizarre, imaginative, disturbing, and darkly comic look into the mind of a child psychopath. Meet Frank Cauldhame. Just sixteen, and unconventional to say the least: Two years after I killed Blyth I murdered my young brother Paul, for quite different and more fundamental reasons than I'd disposed of Blyth, and then a year after that I did for my young cousin Esmerelda, more or less on a whim. That's my score to date. Three. I haven't killed anybody for years, and don't intend to ever again. It was just a stage I was going through.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (306 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

"My dad's an eccentric.....I suppose I am, too....But it doesn't bother me. There are a lot madder people about the place" (Banks, 111). Frank Cauldhame is a sixteen year old juvenile delinquent with a quirky, to say the least, personality. He's got a penchant for death, destruction, mayhem and mischief. He's also highly superstitious. Combine these aforementioned traits with intelligence, methodicism, and zeal, and you have a potentially dangerous character on your hands. Rather than shy away from this odd hodge-podge of personality traits, Ian Banks chooses to dissect them, exploring various nooks and crannies within his book *The Wasp Factory*. Among the ranks of *American Psycho*'s Patrick Bateman, and *Exquisite Corpse*'s Andrew Compton and Jay Byrne, Frank Cauldhame calmly and casually admits within the early pages of this book that he has killed three of his family members. From there, the reader follows a day in the life of Frank, in which animal slaughter, war games, and thoughtful introspection are the norm. However, the eccentricities

of Frank and his world would not be complete without and accompanying eccentric family. Frank's father, Angus, is quiet and contemplative, exchanging only a few words with his son daily regarding the measurements of household items. Frank's older brother, Eric, however, chooses the more in-your-face approach with which to display his unconventional nature. Eric, placed in an asylum some time ago for setting fire to dogs and forcing children to eat worms, has escaped and spends a good chunk of the book finding his way back home to the family with whom he fits so well.

I found 'The Wasp Factory' enjoyable mainly for its ideas and certain aspects of its style. That is to say, I liked the Factory itself, I liked the sacrifice poles, and the accounts of the murders, and basically everything having anything to do with Frankie's odd, personalized occult system. I enjoyed the distorted sense of reality and the surreal atmosphere. And I was rather charmed with Frankie's father, a fascinating, well-painted, amusing, and somewhat creepy character. Most everything else about the book annoyed or disappointed me in some way. My appreciation for Frankie's father didn't extend to his brother Eric, who didn't feel real enough and was WAY too cliche-insane, particularly in his (weak) phone conversations w/ Frankie. And Frankie himself didn't feel nearly as fleshed-out as he should've been: he always felt somehow off to me, as if the author didn't quite have a full handle on him. In general, I liked the ideas and the style of the story, but I didn't like the way the text carried them. The writing felt a bit awkward and tell-tale-ish ("I went to the beach and then I did this and then I got tired so I rode my bike along the creek and when I got to the bump I jumped it like I used to as a kid and finally I got back to the house for lunch and ... etc. etc.) -- and at points it was flat-out boring. The atmosphere of the actual story and the style of the *writing* seemed somehow at odds with each other. I never felt quite as immersed or gripped as I felt I could have been, had the author known how to render his material more effectively. I found the unusual ending of the book interesting in and of itself, but I didn't feel like the story had really built up to this particular revelation. In general I felt as if Mr.

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