



Snakes Can't Run

Ed Lin

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An epic of New York Chinatown noir in the vein of George Pelecanos and Richard Price, this is the riveting sequel to the highly acclaimed *This Is a Bust*

It's a hot summer in New York's Chinatown in 1976 and Robert Chow, the Chinese-American detective son of an illegal immigrant, takes on a new breed of ruthless human smugglers— snakeheads—when two bodies of smuggled Chinese are found dead under the Brooklyn Bridge underpass. But as Robert comes closer to finding some answers, he discovers a dark secret in his own family's past...

Snakes Can't Run Details

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Author : Ed Lin

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Will says

I liked this better than the first in the series, but not as much as his debut work *Waylaid* (one of my favorites of the millenium). Something that stood out in this one over *This is a Bust* is that I really recognized how the people in the book really said things that you would expect real people to say. The new characters were vivid and the struggles of immigrants in Chinatown seemed hopeless in an authentic way. Like, this is the situation and it sucks but maybe one person can make a difference on a very small scale. Or whatever.

Paulmbauer says

This book was a lot of fun. I don't usually read detective/police-type novels, but the author is a friend and got me in a headlock until I bought it. OK, kidding about the headlock. As someone fairly new to NYC who has spent a lot of time in Chinatown, it really taught me a lot about the rich history of that famous neighborhood. It was also a fun page-turning whodunnit. Ed really captures the feel of the City in the 1970's, even though he himself wasn't born until the late 1990's. OK, again, kidding. The variety of different kinds of characters really gave a multi-faceted view. A colorful story of a colorful time and place.

Lucinda says

Snakes Can't Run (Minotaur 2010) is the second Robert Chow novel, following the travails of a Chinatown beat cop in 1976 New York City. The first book, *This Is a Bust* (2007), had a thin detective/mystery thread and a lot of fascinating local color, post-Vietnam War angst, and resentment over his status as the 5th Precinct token, condemned to a hell of attending community events to show how progressive the NYPD is. Robert wants to be a detective, but with his beer-for-breakfast routine and attitude problems, it seems unlikely he'll ever be more than a disappointment to himself and his family. In the second book, still in 1976, Robert, born in the US and named after Robert Mitchum, is fighting the same battles, but doing better on most fronts: he's in his third month of sobriety, he's on the detective track paired with his former beat partner and fellow Vietnam vet, a black detective named John Vandyne, and he has a steady girlfriend. Chow and Vandyne are after the "snakehead" human smugglers after two Fukienese bodies turn up in the East River. The book is replete with smart dialogue and fascinating snippets of life in Chinatown, a complex stew of competing political cultures (Nationalist, Communist, Hong Kong) and regional/historical subgroups (Cantonese, Fukienese, Hong Kong, Shanghainese, etc.). The recurring characters are interesting and their relationships continue to develop. As the author says, this book, set in America's bicentennial year, is not just about Chinese-Americans, but about Americans in America.

http://www.stopyourekillingme.com/L_A...

Tenement Talks says

Are you an Ed Lin fan in the New York Area?

FREE TALK "Chinatown Noir" with ED LIN and HENRY CHANG hosted by the Lower East Side Tenement Museum!

Two master storytellers pull us into Chinatown's darkest recesses in their newest mysteries, which teem with snakeheads, urban terrorists, and corrupt cops. Signed copies of Red Jade (Chang) and Snakes Can't Run (Lin) will be available.

When: Wednesday, October 27 at 6:30pm

Where: 108 Orchard Street, New York, New York, 10002

Please RSVP at events@tenement.org

Chloe says

I feel much the same towards this book as I did towards the its predecessor, This is a Bust: meh. I'm grateful to have an opportunity to read about Asian-Americans solving crimes and dealing with war trauma and navigating intergenerational and intercultural conflict, BUT despite my delight in having a book about people (somewhat) like me (written by someone who shares my last name!) I couldn't really get into the groove of this series. I strongly suspect it's the dialogue - the characters speak with exclamation marks half the time! It sounds like the book is yelling at me! Come to think of it, my grandma and mom always talk to me like they're yelling at me! Maybe it's cultural -- but I still don't like it!

Patty says

An excellent author and already, some critics prone to bigotry are attempting, without luck, to belittle Lin's substance and talent. I find the language excellently applied i this gritty novel and fitting each character like an iPod skin made exactly to shape. The story is riveting in its history and explanations of the truth of Chinese history in the USA. Well written and fresh, based on the underbelly of China Town and enlightening. This book outlines the difficulties that Chinese men have had in their own society and well as the West, travails to rival the females' foot binding.

Robin says

What a cool book. Set in the late 70's, Ed Lin's detective is a Chinese American Vietnam vet who works in Chinatown. The story is complicated and no one can really be trusted - it's a wonderful police book as well as a wonderful noir book, with a setting and time period that hasn't been done to death. Because the point of view is very Chinese, it makes the book even more of an intriguing read.

Dave says

“Snakes Can’t Run” is the middle of three books in Ed Lin’s Robert Chow police detective series, which

features a Chinese-American police detective assigned to New York's Chinatown in 1976, an area he is intimately familiar and entwined with. It is an area riven by differences regarding what was going on with China in the Seventies as the world, including the U.S., came to accept the existence of Communist China and the Nationalists started to come to grips with the difficulties of their dreams of freeing China.

Although there is a mysterious double murder, this is not a police procedural. Rather, the focus of the book is on Chow's life in Chinatown and the traditions and customs of that area. In much the same way Robert Campbell used Jimmy Flannery to introduce the neighborhoods of Chicago, Lin used Chow to walk the reader through the restaurants and toy shops and relationships of Chinatown.

Chow is haunted by demons from his past such as his turbulent tour of duty in Vietnam and his troubled relationship with his father. Chow is also haunted, like Block's Matt Scudder, by alcoholism and sobriety. He is frustrated with the difficulties of getting the Chinese community to come forward as crime witnesses, the ongoing existence and pull of gangs in the neighborhood, and by the Snakeheads who exploited the so-called Human Snakes or illegal immigrants whose debts for the long passage appeared to exist in an unending spiral of indentured servitude.

It is an easy read and a quick one. Thank you to Harper Collins for providing an advance copy of the book.

Deedee Light says

This book is terribly written. The language dull and characters flat. I did read it was translated and only hope that this book in its tongue is worth more than the 1/2 star I'll give it. I'm gifting that 1/2 star because the book does good job of explaining the Taiwanese KMT and Chinese politics that were the result of Mao's ousting of Chiang Kai-shek.

Debbi Mack says

I highly recommend this book, which explores the world of "snakeheads" (or human smugglers) from the point of view of a Chinese-American police detective. I only gave it four stars, because some of the dialogue gets a bit speechy at times. On the whole, however, it's a great read.

I've written a review of this book for Mystery Scene Magazine, which you can read here:
<http://www.mysteryscenemag.com/index....>

I've also posted about the review on my blog at <http://thebookgrrl.blogspot.com/2010/...>

Jessica says

This is a solid sequel to "This is a Bust." The murders that Policeman Chow is investigating are related to a larger crime of illegal human trafficking in Chinatown. And of course as with almost any crime book, show

or movie the cop takes it personally because of connection in his own family or life. But overall the plot is good because Lin's strength is the time period, setting and history and so you learn a lot about Chinatown in the 70s and political events shaping the community and he always has interesting descriptions of meals. The dialogue is a little stiff at times and he uses lots of exclamation points! Which can be distracting/annoying! But overall it is an easy and interesting crime novel. I will likely read the third in the series.

Andrew Lee says

An excellent follow up to Mr. Lin's previous novel featuring Officer Robert Chang. Our protagonists is in a somewhat better place now with being more established in Chinatown, set up with his girlfriend Lonnie, and actually working on detective track assignments. This time the main crime focuses around Snakes and Snake heads; slang for the illegal immigrants and those who smuggled them in. As a Taiwanese-American, it's fascinating to read about the experience of Chinese-Americans in the 1970s faced with both a much stronger KMT back then still running the show in Chinatowns. This backdrop is well explored as Officer Chang's faced with interviewing witnesses while navigating the complex political climate of New York's Chinatown in the 1970s.

As Robert nears the eventual unearthing of the Snakehead among his cast of suspects, he's also faced with the history of his own father's past as an illegal immigrant and the themes of how this kind of illegal immigration and exploitation of his own father was damaging. A fascinating mystery that explores the horrors of illegal immigration of Chinese Americans in the latter half of the twentieth century. Highly recommended for any mystery lovers or lovers of Chinese-American or even Asian American history.

Alex Rogers says

Poor. I like tightly written noir, and also like it in vernacular - but Lin's English is serviceable at best, clumsy at worst, and I soon got tired of the book. I want the writing to either disappear completely, or be beautiful / interesting / amusing if it is present - Lin's writing reads like a bad translation from another language (Mandarin? Fukien?) His characters and stories are potentially interesting.

Carol Jean says

Lin is a remarkably vivid writer. In this book, his now sober detective investigates human smuggling and the Chinese version of the coyote. Excellent.

Monica says

Chinatown in 1976 - Robert Chow is no longer the token - for window dressing - Chinese cop in Chinatown. He is three months sober and on the path to becoming a detective. He has a life, and a girlfriend who wants to be a journalist. He and his fellow Vietnam vet partner Vandyne are following up on a couple of murders and a mysterious snake head who is bringing in illegal immigrants from Fujian and placing them in low level jobs in local businesses.

The local scene is richly portrayed, the characters are and their relationships are well developed - and I'm looking forward th the third in the series.
