Author serves notice to more readers

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By Hong Xiao in New York |   
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Zhou Haohui will be getting a wider audience for his gritty crime stories.  
The first book in the Chinese author's trilogy Death Notice has been published in English by Doubleday in the United States.  
Translated by Shanghai-based Zac Haluza, Death Notice had a first print run in the US of 18,000 copies and was released on June 5.  
Written in 2009 by Zhou, one of the top suspense authors in China, the Death Notice trilogy is China's bestselling work of suspense fiction, with more than 1 million print copies sold.  
The online series based on the novels has captured more than 2.4 billion views.  
"Death Notice is an explosive, page-turning thriller filtered through a vibrant cultural lens," is how Doubleday describes the book.  
Set in Chengdu, the story features Captain Pei Tao as he and other detectives attempt to track down Eumenides, a shadowy vigilante who sends letters, or death notices, to people he believes have gotten away with crimes.  
Zhou's page on Amazon describes him as "a leading contemporary master of suspense in China" and "the author of more than 10 novels exploring the intersection of human nature, criminal motive, and the art of detection".  
Zhou's books also include The Evil Hypnotist, The Horrific Picture and The Ghost Mountain.  
In addition to English, his works have been translated into French, Korean and Japanese and have been adapted for film and television. Zhou was born in Yangzhou, Jiangsu province and has a master's degree in engineering from Tsinghua University.  
Robert Bloom, editor at Doubleday, said that the intrigue that Zhou immerses his characters in is the perfect cocktail of action and madness, "but I was particularly drawn in by a Chinese writer telling a definitively Chinese story", he said of his initial impression of the novel.  
"As an American reader, I've been trained to expect a certain kind of response from the archetypes we see in many thrillers - the lone wolf detective, the gruff police captain, the police psychologist, and so on," he wrote in an email to China Daily. "(But) in Zhou Haohui's expert hands, we experience all of these traditional roles in a new light and wholly surprising light," he wrote.  
"I think a lot of readers will get that same thrill," the editor added.  
Rather than Beijing and Shanghai, the story is set in Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province in Southwest China. Bloom believes Western readers will take to the plot.  
"It's so different from a Western writer trying to capture how foreign and exotic the city may feel to an outsider," he said.  
"Many readers may never have been to Chengdu, and experiencing it without a filter is one of the thrills of the book," he said.  
"We get to experience a major Chinese city, from its skyscrapers to its roughest areas, and we get it from the point of view of someone who knows it," he added.  
Bloom said Haluza "did a superb job of translating Zhou's vision into English".  
"Death Notice is a gritty, hard-hitting page turner set on the mean streets of a China you've never seen before. A first rate tale of criminal intrigue right up there with the best of Michael Connelly and Jo Nesbo," wrote Christopher Reich, The New York Times best-selling author of Rules of Deception.  
Bloom said translation of the next two books in the series is being planned, and Doubleday hopes to find Zhou the audience in America he deserves.

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