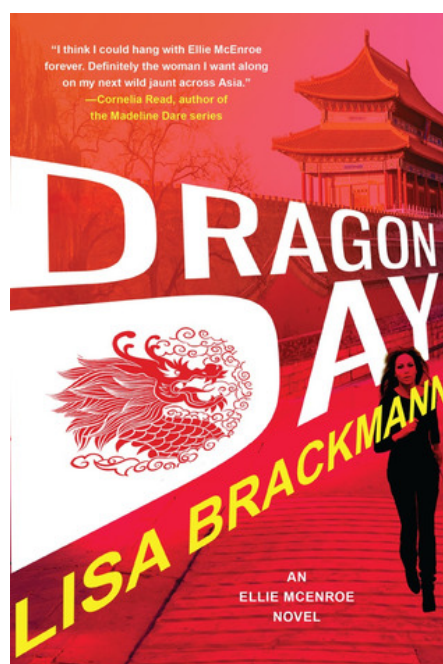




Dragon Day

Lisa Brackmann

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Ellie McEnroe is an Iraq War vet living in Beijing, where she represents the work of cutting-edge Chinese political artists. She has one bum leg, a taste for dumplings and beer, and an evangelical mother and a sweet-tempered rescue mutt for roommates. She also has Chinese Domestic Security on her tail and a dwindling number of Percocets to get her through her bad days.

And she's about to have some bad days. The immensely powerful—and occasionally homicidal—Shanghai billionaire Sidney Cao has asked Ellie to investigate Marsh Brody, his son's suspicious new American business partner. Ellie knows she can't refuse, and is grudgingly swept up into the elite social circles of Sidney's three children: debauched Guwei, rebellious Meimei and social climber Tiantian. When a waitress is murdered at one of Tiantian's parties, the last thing Ellie wants is to get sucked into a huge scandal involving China's rich and powerful. But Ellie quickly becomes the most convenient suspect and realizes she'll have to figure out who really did it—and even that might not be enough to save herself.

Dragon Day Details

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From Reader Review Dragon Day for online ebook

Pat says

Let's start with the fact that I will read anything Ms. Brackmann writes. I love her style, that first person, present tense that puts me right inside a character's head and right in the middle of the action. It's pretty intense. And I love her characters. And Ellie McEnroe is near the top of my list of favorite literary characters. Maybe it's me. Maybe I just have an affinity for broken, rebellious, stubborn, smart women. That's Ellie. If you haven't read the first two "Ellie" books, go get them now. I mean it. While each of the books in this trilogy can stand alone, you'll appreciate Ellie so much more in Dragon Day if you've read Rock Paper Tiger and Hour of the Rat first. So go do that first.

For those who don't know her, Ellie is an Iraq War veteran living as an expat in China. She saw a bunch of crap and has PTSD, though she fights it in her own stubborn way every day. Her leg was badly injured there, too, so sometimes Percocet and beer and too much coffee and bad words are what it takes to get through a day, although she's fighting that, too (well, maybe not the beer. Beer and dumplings are always good). She isn't anybody's idea of a sweet little girl (except to her born-again Christian mom, who's now living with her. She tolerates Ellie's potty mouth and unfortunate knack for trouble, but she worries and makes tacos and tries to help where she can.) This line from the book sums up Ellie: "Don't show them the soft spot where they can hurt you."

Ellie is now a manager for a high profile dissident artist who used to be a sometimes lover and is now in hiding from the Chinese authorities he dissed. He's not as "present" in this book as he was in the previous two, but he still has a vital, key role to play, still influencing the direction of Ellie's life. Now Shanghai billionaire Sidney Cao, who we met in Hour of the Rat (and who wants some of that art Ellie represents), has a job for Ellie, investigating one of his son's shady American friends. And Ellie is not exactly in a position to turn down Sidney. She kind of owes him for saving her life. Then a woman is murdered, and in typical Ellie fashion, she can't just walk away, in spite of the multiple strands of hell breaking loose all around her. And it's all even more complicated because, you know, China. Politics, secrecy, bribery, family connections, tradition. That stuff.

And have no doubt, China is a character in this book in the same way that a big scary house is a character in a Gothic romance. China is a beauty and the beast country with unimaginable over the top, flamboyant, out-of-control new wealth and squalid subterranean dwellings side-by-side. Ms. Brackmann has a knack for pointing out the ugly in the beautiful and the beauty in the ugliness. She is neither overly cynical nor overly sentimental about it. Neither is her protagonist.

And without spoilers or giving away too much, those who were frustrated with the ending of Rock Paper Tiger will find immense satisfaction in the circular "call back" end to Dragon Day. Ms. Brackmann is not an author who rushes things. Though she's an American, she understands the "long view" of the Chinese. The entirety of the Great Wall took 2,000 years to build. Ms. Brackmann has taken three books to tell us about Ellie. Though this is a trilogy, there are rumors that there may be more "Ellie books" in the future. I hope so. I'm not ready to let her go.

Jennifer Prim says

Just finished the book, and I'm already in withdrawals. Lisa Brackmann has done a remarkable thing in the creation of Ellie McEnroe. Would I want to be her? Not on your life! But would I want to know her, in all of

her flawed awesomeness? Absolutely. The plot for the third book of the trilogy is another intriguing thriller bringing together Creepy John, her potential love interest/potential stalker with ties to the secret police; Lao Zhang, the political artist on the run, who she describes as her "home," and Sidney Cao, billionaire art collector who may or may not be very dangerous, but definitely has his hands full with three children who have secrets of their own. And then there's Pompadour Bureaucrat. Just the name alone evokes distinct mental images. But the truth is, as great as the twists & turns in this story, I don't even need a terrific plot; I would happily read a book about Ellie getting her nails done - she's that funny and quirky and desperate and self-protective, and confused, and determined, and quick-thinking and utterly likable. Brava to Lisa Brackmann for writing her - and these three books so damn well. I've heard some rumblings about a possible fourth book. I'm afraid to get my hopes up, but I so want the saga of Ellie McEnroe to go on!

Wendy Ledger says

We had the pleasure of hearing this series through Audible. The reader, Tracie Sallows, was great, and the writing is fantastic. I thought the ending of this book was so beautiful, I wanted to swoon at the prose. We have grown so attached to these characters. I would love to see more books in this series.

Nathan Bransford says

Awesome chapter in this cool, fascinating, edgy, transporting series. Start with Rock Paper Tiger and keep going!

David says

This is the third book in a series about Ellie McEnroe, a former National Guard medic who got fucked up in Iraq, went to China with her ex-Army husband in one of those seemed-like-a-good-idea-at-the-time moves, and stayed because it was easier than going back home.

Like many ongoing series, there is pleasure in reading about the next chapter in the lives of familiar characters, but also a sameness as the author starts stretching for new ideas.

In the last book, Ellie was "befriended" by an eccentric billionaire named Sidney Cao. Friendships with billionaires always come with strings attached, so when Sidney asks Ellie to do something for her, she is not in a position to refuse.

What he wants her to do is "check up on" his eldest son and evaluate the people he's hanging around with. Having no idea how she's supposed to do this or why Sidney thinks she's qualified, Ellie nonetheless does her best. This gets her mixed up with all three of Sidney's children, who are exactly what you'd expect spoiled children of nouveau rich Chinese billionaires to be. After one of the parties she attends with all these one-percenters, a girl turns up dead, and since no one is going to accuse a bunch of rich kids, Ellie becomes a suspect.

Trying to figure out what actually happened, maybe even get some justice for the dead girls (yup, the first body is followed by a second), while not getting swatted by the rich and powerful or the Chinese security services takes Ellie on another harrowing crawl through modern China. She is helped by her kinda sorta

maybe boyfriend, "Creepy John," from the last book, who works for some branch of the Chinese government and may or may not be on her side, and aided with comic relief from her evangelical Christian mother, who came to China in the last book and stayed after hooking up with an evangelical Chinese boyfriend.

Lisa Brackmann has written three engaging books about Ellie McEnroe now. Her descriptions of China remain believable and interesting (to the degree I can judge, never having been to China), and she is very strong in characterization and plotting. I'll keep reading books about Ellie, but I think it will be hard to keep them fresh and her author page suggests that she may be done with our poor PTSD-disabled vet for a while. Probably a good decision, but I do recommend the series highly.

Monica says

If this book really is the end of the series, Brackmann is ending it on a high note. Ellie, with her PTSD and her overreliance on Percocet and alcohol, is an appealing protagonist, smart, resilient, loyal and tenacious - and a bit snarky. When Sidney Cao, a billionaire art collector, hires her to investigate the American friend of one of his three adult children, she is reluctant but cannot refuse.

The best things about this book in my opinion are the vivid descriptions of life in present day Shanghai and Beijing, from the incredibly glitzy and expensive haunts of the wealthy to the overcrowded cellars where the rural transplants who wait on them live. It gives an interesting perspective on what it is like for Ellie and her mother as foreigners to be living in working class quarters in Beijing, learning the territory, trying not to attract unwanted attention.

The lives of the children of the newly wealthy, the astonishing pace of social change and relocation, the redefinitions of class and culture are all fascinating.

Ramsey Hootman says

There's so much goodness packed into this book I don't even know where to start. It's probably my favorite Ellie book so far, although I think the reason for that is because it builds on the other two. (Which is to say, I recommend starting with Rock Paper Tiger!)

I'm always seeking out books with great characters, and Ellie is one of the best. I love her straightforward, no-nonsense manner, her deadpan commentary on the absurdities of modern China, and her "non-gender-conformity," as they call it these days. She's a master of understatement, and there were more than a couple times when I laughed out loud and stopped to read a line to my partner. You don't find many female protagonists like her, and it's completely refreshing. I want more!

I can also vouch personally for the fact that this book is spot-on when it comes to the "China experience." White-girl me lived in mainland China for a year, and it's a pleasure to read a book that is so accurate when it comes to the expat experience - while also not being exploitative or "othering" Chinese culture. Brackmann's observations about modern Chinese life are sharp, completely on-point, and always fascinating. I love how she digs into really unique parts of the culture, particularly relating to class and current events. Dragon Day, like the other Ellie books, is the kind of thing I recommend to anyone who wants to know more about the complexities of modern Chinese life.

The reason this book was my favorite of the three, however, is the fact that we finally start to see some

evolution in Ellie's character. She's forced to confront the fact that she is sort of passive-aggressively suicidal, and that she cannot continue on with her current trajectory. Something in her life is going to have to change, because the percocet and beer won't last forever. Well... maybe she'll always have the beer.

I look forward to seeing what comes next!

Ramona says

I received this book as a goodreads giveaway and as such I would like to thank the all those involved (author, publisher and goodreads) for sending me this novel. I have not read the two earlier books of the series and it may have been helpful to have done so, but it did work as a stand alone novel. The novel was fast paced with lots of twists and turns. An enjoyable read. Thanks

Kris Herndon says

I've loved this series and am sad to see it wrap up. Ellie is a great flawed heroine. Brackmann manages to make her tough and vulnerable without resorting to clichés -- both the toughness and the vulnerability are built deep into the character. I'm with Ellie fans who hope for more in the series someday---BUT I'm also looking forward to seeing what else Brackmann has in store.

Susan says

I love this latest Ellie McEnroe thriller. Ellie is back, with her mother in tow, and no matter how much she wants to live on the periphery of the fast lifestyle of her crazy rich clients in Beijing and Shanghai, she can't help but get drawn back into another murder mystery. With a high-level government official on her trail, she doesn't know who to trust as she works against the clock to solve not just one, but two murders.

Deborah Gray says

Lisa Brackmann keeps getting better and better and Ellie more fully fleshed as a character in each successive book. Almost fatally flawed and perennially out of sorts, you still want to see her succeed as she navigates the mean streets of China's cities evading bad guys and looking for answers to whatever fix she's landed in this time.

They say there are no new stories, but I find Brackmann's take on plot, character and setting to be refreshingly unique. The meticulous research on contemporary urban China is evident in each nuanced scene, so that I felt I had penetrated and become immersed in a culture that is entirely foreign to me. Ellie McEnroe, injured Iraq war vet with PTSD, a bum leg, bad attitude and a pain med addiction is hardly a conventional protagonist, but there's not a false step (other than Ellie's limp) in the whole book. There's always a political undercurrent to Brackmann's books in her unflinching portrayal of China, but she still manages to make you want to go there to see its beauty for yourself.

It was hard to tell from the ending of this one, but I'm hoping there is another Ellie McEnroe adventure in our

future.

Ann Mah says

This terrific fast-paced thriller continues Ellie McEnroe's adventures in China. I read it on the subway, so engrossed I almost missed my stop!

Alice Lindsay says

I read many mysteries, and I think I have a perspective on the genre. I am not a patient reader and I have a hard time finding something I really like on all the levels that a book can hit. My biggest question about this series is: How is this not a movie???? It really hits the mark. I have to accept that there were only three in this series but I hold out for the possibility of meeting Ellie McEnroe again. Seriously, this is a wonderful story with action, character, introspection and reflection but constant movement forward.

L.A. Starks says

I cannot begin to say how much I liked this book. It appears to be the third in a trilogy, but I really hope Brackmann decides to write more about these characters.

Ellie McEnroe, a war veteran, is living in China. She represents an artist but is pulled into a billionaire's plan to build an art museum.

Brackmann gets the Chinese setting so dead-on she could be writing non-fiction except that the suspense of who's doing the killing pulls the reader forward.

The protagonist is sharp, self-aware, bitter, and funny.

Brackmann's descriptions of the casual corruption, the empty villages, the extremes of wealth and poverty side-by-side is a tour de force.

If Goodreads offered six stars, that's what I'd give this book.

Karina Buck says

I am a big fan of Lisa Brackmann. "Dragon Day" is the third book in her Ellie MacEnroe series, which includes "Rock Paper Tiger" and "Hour of the Rat." In "Dragon Day", Brackmann expands and flushes out Ellie's quirky, damaged, and endearing ex-pat living-on-the-margins-in-China anti-heroine. It's another page-turning story that finds Ellie unwillingly caught up in intrigue that takes us around Beijing, Shanghai and surrounds, and offers up a fascinating glimpse into contemporary Chinese culture and society. I was especially taken with Brackmann's depiction of the dissolute, decadent lives of the offspring of the Cultural Revolutionaries, as well as her characters fighting to expose the corruption of China's power elite, and reset the mega-country's course to one that benefits all levels of society.

It's a satisfying read. At the end of the book, Brackmann wraps up her story in a way that feels sort of resolved, but also leaves the door open for another book. Which I for one would read immediately.
