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Counterfeit

by Kirstin Chen



About the Book

For fans of *Hustlers* and HOW TO GET FILTHY RICH IN RISING ASIA, the story of two Asian American women who band together to grow a counterfeit handbag scheme into a global enterprise --- an incisive and glittering blend of fashion, crime and friendship from the author of BURY WHAT WE CANNOT TAKE and SOY SAUCE FOR BEGINNERS.

Money can?t buy happiness? but it can buy a decent fake.

Ava Wong has always played it safe. As a strait-laced, rule-abiding Chinese American lawyer with a successful surgeon as a husband, a young son and a beautiful home, she?s built the perfect life. But beneath this façade, Ava?s world is crumbling: her marriage is falling apart, her expensive law degree hasn?t been used in years, and her toddler?s tantrums are pushing her to the breaking point.

Enter Winnie Fang, Ava?s enigmatic college roommate from Mainland China, who abruptly dropped out under mysterious circumstances. Now, 20 years later, Winnie is looking to reconnect with her old friend. But the shy, awkward girl Ava once knew has been replaced with a confident woman of the world, dripping in luxury goods, including a coveted Birkin in classic orange. The secret to her success? Winnie has developed an ingenious counterfeit scheme that involves importing near-exact replicas of luxury handbags, and now she needs someone with a U.S. passport to help manage her business --- someone who?d never be suspected of wrongdoing, someone like Ava. But when their spectacular success is threatened and Winnie vanishes once again, Ava is left to face the consequences.

Swift, surprising and sharply comic, COUNTERFEIT is a stylish and feminist caper with a strong point of view and an axe to grind. Peering behind the curtain of the upscale designer storefronts and the Chinese factories where luxury goods are produced, Kirstin Chen interrogates the myth of the model minority through two unforgettable women determined to demand more from life.

Discussion Guide

1. Before reading COUNTERFEIT, how much knowledge did you have about how the handbag manufacturing business operated? Has this book illuminated the specifics of the industry in any surprising ways?

2. Although we never see or hear from the detective Ava is confessing to directly, were you able to grasp any character attributes about this person? Did you feel, as the reader, that you were being invited to be the arbiter of legitimacy in Ava?s story?

3. Consider the emphasis on branding in fashion. Do you find that luxury brands are always synonymous with quality? Are you loyal to any brands? If so, why?

4. What do you think a strong friendship requires? Are Winnie and Ava good friends for each other? How did you initially interpret their relationship, and how did your impression change as the novel progressed?

5. Winnie and Ava discuss the labor conditions in brand name factories. Do consumers have a responsibility to ensure the ethical production of products they purchase? Do you think most consumers care?

6. How do Winnie and Ava contend with the model minority stereotype that exists for the AAPI community in the United States? How do they take advantage of it?

7. How did your impression of Boss Mak shift over the course of the novel? How do you perceive his relationship with Winnie? Did you feel any sympathy for him at any point?

8. Did you see the main twist in the novel coming? How did your understanding of the story change after the reveal?

9. After the events of the novel, how do you see Ava?s and Winnie?s lives progressing? Have they been irrevocably changed by their experiences within these pages?

10. Does the title of the novel, COUNTERFEIT, refer to more than just knockoff handbags? What else could the title pertain to?

Author Bio

Kirstin Chen is the *New York Times* bestselling author of three novels. Her latest, COUNTERFEIT, is a Reese Witherspoon book club pick, a Roxane Gay book club pick, and a *New York Times* Editors? Choice. It has also been

recommended by *The Washington Post*, *People Magazine*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *USA Today*, *Vogue*, *Time*, Oprah Daily, *Harper?s Bazaar*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Parade* and more. Translation rights have sold in seven languages and television rights have been optioned by Sony Pictures. Her previous two novels are BURY WHAT WE CANNOT TAKE and SOY SAUCE FOR BEGINNERS.

She has received fellowships and awards from the Steinbeck Fellows Program, Sewanee, Hedgebrook, Djerassi, the Napa Valley Writers? Conference, the Toji Cultural Foundation, and the National Arts Council of Singapore. Her writing has appeared in *The Cut*, *Real Simple*, *Literary Hub*, *Writer?s Digest*, *Zyzzyva*, and the *Best New Singaporean Short Stories*. She holds an MFA from Emerson College and a BA from Stanford University. Born and raised in Singapore, she lives in New York City.

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