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Since 1982 he has lived in Rome. He has also worked as a musician.

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In *Runners* John Fraser delivers in his unique, distinct voice, the story of a kind of redemption – even a kind of utopia – or as much of a utopia as we can possibly expect, given what we know about most of our political leaders ...

An unelected leader buys the office of deputy mayor. Although this 'boss' is a monster, he also has a rare, enlightened side. Where other leaders cling to power, he *runs* – but instead of running for office, he runs from office; he and his friends become the Runners – the running dogs.

*Runners* is a contemporary re-run, a remake of Machiavelli's Prince, with a nod to Gramsci's 'Modern Prince', the revolutionary party. It is a tale of complicity between leaders, the nature of political friendships and loyalties, the contradictions between leaders and electors, between democratic rhetoric and practice, the leadership and the base – the urban and feathered – the volatility, adaptability and motivations of leaders, and of the pursuit of justice in the personal, incongruous instance; the machismo of political culture.

'In Fraser's fiction the reader rides as on a switchback or luge of impetuous attention, with effects flashing by at virtuoso speeds. The characters seem to be unwitting agents of chaos, however much wise attention Fraser bestows upon them; they move with shrugging self-assurance through circumstances as richly detailed and as without reliable compass points as a Chinese scroll.'

*John Fuller*

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John Fraser

RUNNERS

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AESOP MODERN FICTION

*I feel she's sold her soul, but how much for? To whom? I'd be a monster, though I think I've been one, and it didn't satisfy.*

*'Your killing all those people, then feeling sorry,' she says. 'That gives you all the credit you should need.'*

*When I hear the word 'credit', I think of all my plants, the creeping things, the slime of life that's turning into butterflies. It makes me sad. I can't take them with me, I think.*

*'The Chief did let me run,' Lili says. 'In fact, the running was the point, for if you run and run, the demons never catch you,' and I think my strength lies in my running faster than my demons ...*

*'I love getting clean,' shouts Lili, running, running, white legs flicking round the Tower of Silence, up to the loggia, sleek between the pillars, pausing at a balcony ... What will those musicians play? I see a bandoneon, some Chinese fiddles, a soprano warming with cicada sounds.*

*Lili is naked now, and there are other athletes, men and women, running in circles, round and countersense, it could be dervishes, the light exploding into twirling giddiness, though their own gaze is fixed upon a point, the point from which light comes. Somewhere below there must be notables, praying or getting drunk, and maybe all will end in purification, or in sex – a scrumage – or in sleep and prayer and dreams of being someone else who's not alive and so – this is eternal life, but not eternity.*

*from Runners*

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