The author would like to thank Lee Po Ng for the 44 magnificent illustrations featured in this volume; Jack Chang for appearing on the cover; Mark Herz, Louise Aitken and Pete Spurrier for their editorial support; the Foreign Correspondents’ Club and Pacific Coffee where most of this volume was written; and last but not least, his readers and blog followers whose staunch support has made it all possible.

ISBN 978-988-16138-7-5
Copyright © 2013 Jason Y. Ng
Cover photograph, maps and illustrations © 2013 Jason Y. Ng
www.jasonyng.com

Published by Blacksmith Books
5th Floor, 24 Hollywood Road, Central, Hong Kong
www.blacksmithbooks.com

Illustrations by Lee Po Ng
Maps by Kelvin Ng
Cover design by Ada Ng
Cover photography by Jason Y. Ng

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the publisher, except by a review who may quote brief passages in a review. The right of Jason Y. Ng to be identified as the Author of the Work has been asserted as have his moral rights with respect to the Work.
Contents

Introduction ........................................ 13
About the Illustrator .............................. 15
Timeline of Key Events ......................... 17

Part 1 – Our Way of Life

Lords and Serfs .................................... 20
No City for Slow Men ............................ 31
Horo-Logic ......................................... 40
More Pet Peeves ................................. 46
Why Shop When You Can Taobao? ........ 52
No City for Old Men ............................ 57
Those Who Live in Glass Houses ............ 69
All the Rage ....................................... 74
Calling it Quits .................................... 80
Counting Sheep .................................... 89
Down but Not Out ............................... 93

Part 2 – Our Culture

The Storm Cometh ............................... 100
New Year, Old Customs ....................... 106
Are You Being Served? ......................... 111
Someone Else’s Party .......................... 116
Dining Out.......................................... 121
...Or Eating In .................................... 130
Pirates and Hidden Treasures ............. 138
History in Our Midst ..................... 144
It Could Happen to You ................. 151
Hong Kong Hold’em ..................... 157
My Funny Valentine ..................... 162
The City that Doesn’t Read .............. 166
Cookout Culture .......................... 171
No Place Like Home ..................... 177

Part 3 – Our Identity

HKID ........................................... 184
Martians and Venusians ................. 190
Great Expat’ations ..................... 199
Maid in Hong Kong ..................... 207
Six Decades of Blood, Sweat and Tears .... 222
The Eighth Plague ..................... 227
A Heroless City ......................... 236
The King and I ........................... 242
Spare the Rod ........................... 247
My Father the Artist .................... 252
Ninety-nine Years of Worry ............ 260
Introduction

Writing a book is like having a baby. It is exhilarating and emotional. It is also laborious and mentally trying. The author must slug through the manuscript line by line, page after page. The process has to be repeated many times over until it finally comes out of the womb of the press. Once published, the labor of love takes on a life of its own. It will grow, stumble and then pick itself up. But a parent’s love is unconditional – whatever the reception, the author will always be the book’s biggest fan.

Continuing with that metaphor, writing a second book is akin to getting pregnant again. The perils facing the second child are well known: the novelty of parenthood is gone, comparison with the first born is inevitable. Though many second-time parents discover just the opposite. They discover that, as the family grows, their love multiplies rather than divides. It is one of those human experiences that defies logic and explanation. As I am putting the finishing touches on my second volume here at my favorite café overlooking Hollywood Road, that about sums up how I feel.

No City for Slow Men is a follow-up to HONG KONG State of Mind, released in December 2010 to warm reviews. A lot has happened in Hong Kong in the three years since then. The city has a new chief executive, the Apple Store opened three locations, property prices almost doubled. The overhang of a global financial crisis has dissipated, only to give way to deeper systemic issues. Poverty, a housing shortage and racial disharmony have polarized and paralyzed our society. Distrust of government and
big business has surged to new highs. Tensions between Hong Kong and Mainland China are boiling over. So what are we to do?

The first step in tackling any problem is admitting there is one. The second step is paying attention. In *The Art of War*, General Sun Tze teaches us to know our enemies and know ourselves. This book is intended to do just that. It brings into sharp focus a range of social, cultural and existential quandaries facing our society. It is a collection of opinions that cut through the obfuscation and get straight to the point. It aims to inform and empower.

It also aims to entertain. Hong Kong may be short on land and patience, but there is no scarcity of oddities that tickle us pink. Two books in and I have barely scratched the surface. Our quirks are in such abundance that I could easily write another two dozen volumes. Short of treading into Octomom territory, that is perhaps where the metaphor of child birth will end.

Throughout our history, we have been told time and again that we are a city in decline. Skeptics have long prophesized the end of Hong Kong. Plight after predicament, we have proven them wrong. Our optimism, resilience and that copyrightable brand of Lion Rock Spirit have always pulled us out of the rut. It is ever thus.

 Jason Y. Ng
 Hong Kong, 2013