

No City for Slow Men

Hong Kong's Quirks and Quandaries Laid Bare

Jason Y. Ng

BLACKSMITH BOOKS

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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 on 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