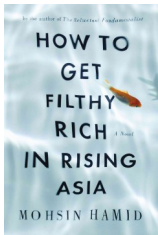


How To Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia



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Masked in the persona of a self-help book, this novel is really a love story and a tale of the ambitious struggle of a rural bumpkin to get ahead in a world madly developing at all costs. Unlucky enough to nearly die from hepatitis as an infant, because he is his mother's favorite, he is saved and the family soon follows the first theorem to worldly success in Asia: move to a big city.

Each chapter summarizes in the title that chapter's method of achieving worldly success; for example, the second chapter advises, "Get an education." Though normally the eldest son in this unnamed Asian country (probably Pakistan) would be pushed to study, in this family the narrator was lucky because his older brother was already learning a trade. And being bright, he succeeded at school despite contradicting a teacher who gave out false information. For in school, you never pointed out the failings of a teacher.

"Don't fall in love" advises chapter three. Now it's tricky describing this book because none of the main characters are named. The narrator is called "the boy," "the bearded man," the "boss," etc. And the girl/woman he falls in love with is always called "the pretty girl." By the time they are both in middle school, they bond over movies. The boy works delivering videos by bicycle and during a chance meeting with "the pretty girl" he discovers her love for film. Soon he is "borrowing" videos for her, and she calls him late at night to discuss them. She is also highly ambitious and moves up in the world as a model, actress, TV show host, and finally furniture importer.

Although possessing a deep cynical core, the business man (he makes his money in bottled water that most of the time is rebottled polluted water) soon learns that greasing the hands of bureaucrats as does working for the defense industry helps you make money faster. He rises higher and higher. Unfortunately, that entails violence and security guards. He does marry but not to the pretty girl. At one point, he describes how overwhelming the love for his son is, even if it all only in one direction.

The novel is full of humanity and wisdom and a scary sense of what it is like to struggle for success in a vastly imperfect world. The writing is strong and you really want to find out what happens to this man in a world full of hate and conflicting ideals.

The book has an odd 2nd person format, one I usually hate, but it worked so well here that I forgot Hamid was using it after a couple of chapters. We have his two earlier books, *Moth Smoke* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, and I can't wait to try them.

Posted by Dory L. on April 29, 2014

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