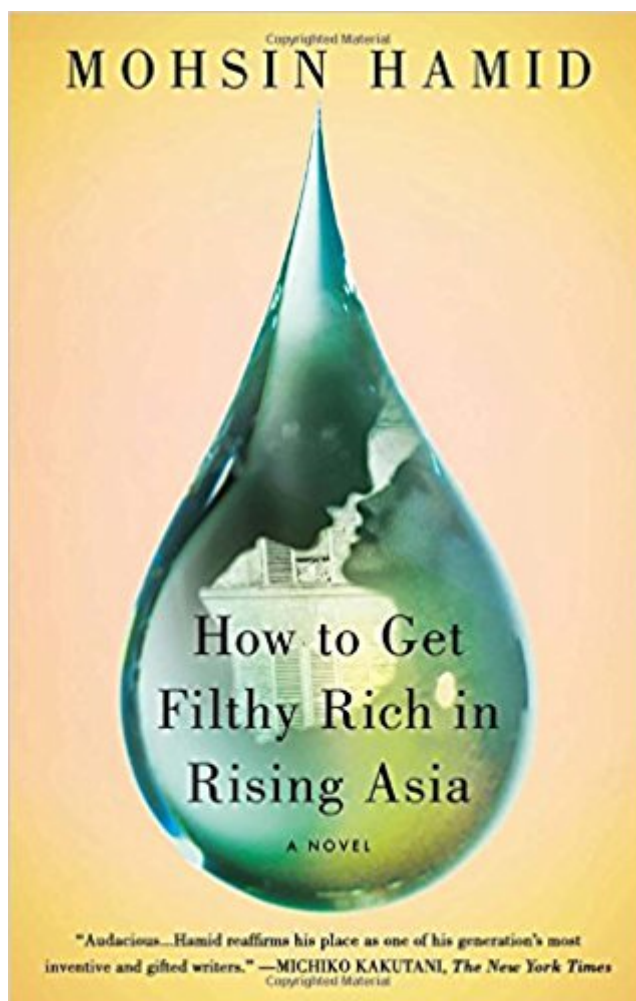


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How To Get Filthy Rich In Rising Asia: A Novel



Synopsis

"Mr. Hamid reaffirms his place as one of his generation's most inventive and gifted writers."

—Michiko Kakutani, *The New York Times* "A globalized version of *The Great Gatsby* . . .

[Hamid's] book is nearly that good." —Alan Cheuse, *NPR* "Marvelous and moving."

—*TIME Magazine* From the internationally bestselling author of *The Reluctant*

Fundamentalist and *Exit West*, coming March 2017, the *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* boldly imagined tale of a poor

boy's quest for wealth and love His first two novels established Mohsin Hamid as a

radically inventive storyteller with his finger on the world's pulse. *How to Get Filthy Rich in*

Rising Asia meets that reputation and exceeds it. The astonishing and riveting tale of a

man's journey from impoverished rural boy to corporate tycoon, it steals its shape from the

business self-help books devoured by ambitious youths all over "rising Asia." It

follows its nameless hero to the sprawling metropolis where he begins to amass an empire built on

that most fluid, and increasingly scarce, of goods: water. Yet his heart remains set on

something else, on the pretty girl whose star rises along with his, their paths crossing and

recrossing, a lifelong affair sparked and snuffed and sparked again by the forces that careen their

fates along. *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* is a striking slice of contemporary life at a time of

crushing upheaval. Romantic without being sentimental, political without being didactic, and spiritual

without being religious, it brings an unflinching gaze to the violence and hope it depicts. And it

creates two unforgettable characters who find moments of transcendent intimacy in the midst of

shattering change.

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Customer Reviews

Guest Review of "How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia" by Mohsin Hamid

By Nell Freudenberger

Nell Freudenberger is the author of, *The Newlynweds* and *Lucky Girls*. I was at a party the other night, when the man standing next to me said, "Where is the next great novel in the second person" (Will someone PLEASE start inviting me to some better parties?) As it turned out, I had an answer without even thinking about it, since I had just finished Mohsin Hamid's extraordinary *How To Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*. This is the kind of novel with a conceit that any writer would envy: the book's structure mimics that of the cheap self-help books sold at sidewalk stands all over South Asia, alongside computer manuals and test-prep textbooks. Each chapter begins with a rule--"Work for Yourself," "Don't Fall in Love," "Be Prepared to Use Violence"--and expertly evolves into a narrative. In precise, notably unsentimental prose, Hamid tells the story of an unnamed boy who moves from a village to a city. Hamid's decision not to name his character or his new home (which feels like Lahore, but could be any number of South Asian cities) is part of what makes the book so urgent and contemporary. "At each subsequent wonder you think you have arrived, that surely nothing could belong more to your destination than this, and each time you are proven wrong until you cease thinking and simply surrender to the layers of marvels and visions washing over you." This boy's journey is part of an enormous migration that is one of the great twenty-first-century stories, and yet Hamid makes it feel intimate and individual: a saucer-eyed kid in the dark on the back of a truck. *How To Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* is a love story as much as a success story, and the opposition of its hero's twin passions gives the book a propulsive intensity. I found myself unable to do anything else until I finished it, and I don't think there's a reader on earth who could help wanting Hamid's hero to succeed--both in business and in his pursuit of "the pretty girl" whom he has loved since childhood. Her capital is a beautiful face that is emblematic of the way her country's ideals are changing; their tumultuous relationship both depends upon their shared past and is frustrated by their common need to escape it. This short novel encompasses an especially eventful life, as its hero builds a small bottled water operation into a hugely successful company and realizes at least some of his dreams. At the same time, the substance of each chapter calls the self-help precept that began it into question--and finally the larger meaning of helping oneself. Can we help ourselves, and how much of our destinies do we control? What is the price of becoming "filthy rich," and does it mean something different for a village kid than it would for someone born into more comfortable circumstances? Hamid is especially moving on the subject of the hero's siblings, whose failure to capitalize on the city's promise has more to do with

chance than with their particular characters. What the reader comes away with above all else is a feeling of tenderness for humankind as a whole--so vulnerable, and with such fierce desires. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Though it wears the clever fleece of the self-help book, *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* is really a bildungsroman, the story of a protagonist's formation across the precarious terrain of youth and entrance to the state of adulthood. --Siddhartha Deb --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

This book isn't a self-help book, but rather the life story of a man who is never named in the book. Born in rural poverty, after moving to city, he slowly climbs in position and wealth. Mohsin Hamid beautifully describes this city--like so many other cities in rising Asia--chaotic, changing and absorbing millions of rural immigrants. Although there are many flaws in these cities, there are many opportunities too. The main character avails these opportunities--education, business. The business he chooses isn't legal, but he climbs the ladder and becomes a rich man. This book beautiful describes this growing city, its flaws and opportunities that it avails. It's a good read on changing demographics and social conditions in Asia's growing cities. There is so much going on in these cities. Thousands of rural people moving in, searching for better life, and some achieving it. It is not slow change; it's visible sudden change. These dynamic cities perhaps hold the key to the future of rising Asia.

Mohsin Hamid's *"How To Get Filthy Rich In Rising Asia"* will keep you spellbound with its prose, but the lack of emotional depth or development in the characters render this short novel a bit of a one trick pony. The trick however is good enough to show up and see what this pony is all about. Told as a second person narrative, *"How To Get Filthy Rich In Rising Asia"* (hereafter "HTGFRIRA"), is about the rise and fall of a unnamed boy who moves to an unnamed slum of a city in poverty and ends up one of its wealthiest denizens. Along the way he will fall in love, start a business, get married, and guide his business up the wheel of fortune and watch as it falls back into the muck. Hamid's book is grounded in enough of present day Third World problems that it feels real and important. All the issues in deregulated Third World states - lack of environmental protection, fraud, corruption, exploitation of workers, vulnerability to organized crime - all come into play here. And because "HTGFRIRA" is so light and unencumbered by plotting or characters, reviewers or well-educated readers can easily turn it into a tool in their next debate. Like a shiny bowl to be filled

with rhetoric. The setting the story takes place in, a world of endless urban sprawl, no environmental regulations, and sub-standard products should be familiar to anyone that has spent time off the beaten path in the sub first world. The nameless hero dodges and weaves his way to the top of the Third World totem pole by cunningly taking advantage of or skirting all the issues I mentioned before. He is a huckster. Selling water, the most essential of all commodities, that he boils to proper safety standards (sometimes) in his basement. He uses a gang to protect himself from violent rivals. He negotiates the asinine bureaucratic rules of the government. The unnamed country (seems like India to me) is as much a character as our protagonist, a place where the drive for growth has outstripped rules and decency, where only the cunning and immoral can advance (a place best shown in journalism in the New Yorker article "Boss Rail" by Evan Osnos from October 2012). Throughout Hamid's prose shines with clever turns of phrases, metaphors, use of imagery continually raising my eyebrows. Brief aside: I would recommend reading this book without the dust jacket. I was approached in the mall while reading it by a woman who thought that it was an ACTUAL self-help book; IE that I actually was reading a book that would teach me how to get filthy rich in rising Asia. She clearly wanted to verbally go at it, as it took some persuading to convince her that it was a novel rather than a tool for me to learn how to exploit and get rich off Asians. She proceeded to say something about Asia which may have been profound but I forgot and something about leadership; how Chris Christie is a true leader because he can physically intimidate people (while saying this she started bumping up against me). Top 5 most bizarre experience I've ever had at a Best Buy Mobile. This book, which I enjoyed a lot, is a little like a Maserati - it's great at going fast, but you couldn't bring your daughter to soccer practice, go on a roadtrip, or get groceries with it. I judge books on prose (writing style, symbolism, use of metaphors, etc), the characters, the plot, and the overlying themes and literary significance (I would probably rate the importance as 30, 30, 30 and 10 percent of my overall grade, respectively). What is missing from "HTGFRIRA" is the drive and motivation of the protagonist. He wants to make a bunch of money, wants his business to succeed. Not sure why....which makes sense, because the protagonist is you! "HTGFRIRA" is undone by the same gimmick which makes it great. The lack of character development and motivation condemns the "HTGFRIRA" to fancy sports car status. Might not be the best car in the world, but it sure can fly, though.

In what is a hiatus that I've devoted to moving to Asia, taking a breath from employment, to regroup and reeducate myself, I've delved into a litany of self improvement books, inadvertently stumbling across this work. Naturally by the time I was half a chapter in I'd realized its nature as a novel rather

than, perhaps, a business advice text with a weird and dark twist. By then it was already too late. I'd been inscrutably sucked into the fascinating postmodern grim, gritty and real nature of this book. It did that very thing that of late prompted me to avoid fiction - filled me with curious its and emotion, dread and interest, and singed my humanity. It also kept me stuck to it for all of about 8 hours finishing it completely. Great read.

Obviously, the title has almost nothing to do with the main idea of the book. It is written in the style of a self help book (2nd person!) but is really chronicling the life of a man who does become wealthy for a time. This book, perhaps more than any I have read, portrays an honest look at what it is like being an average human. The character (you!) has conflicting emotions, a hard set of circumstances but a mostly hopeful disposition, which turns to being driven and finally somewhat retrospective. I can never tell if this book's story is set in the author's home country of Pakistan or in what I perceive to be "rising Asia" -Eastern Asia. I assume it to be the former. I didn't like this one quite as much as "the reluctant fundamentalist" though they both have a similar quality. I get the sense the quality is that they feel like they are intended for an American audience to get a grasp on what it is like for others in our world. I said earlier "an average human" because I think us Americans don't often understand what an average human is like. We represent only 250 million of this world of 6+ billion people. In my experience of living abroad, this gets at the average human as i understand it. I liked that the book seemed to have a grasp on real humanity. Hamid stays near the details of life and doesn't overhype any of it. I listened to the audiobook of hamid's reading of it and though his voice bordered on monotone, I think it was actually quite helpful.

Heard about this book after multiple recommendations from a few guests on the Tim Ferris podcast and a recommendation from one of those VCs who is smart and wears farmer shirts all the time. It's written in a style that is almost conversational and easy to read. Entertaining, thoughtful, engaging and at the end of the book it leads the reader down a path of their own self exploration and for a fleeting moment reminds us to try to live and appreciate every second we have on this earth while embarking on that journey that is the endless pursuit of money with a side order of happiness.

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